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THE

VALIDITY OF *BAPTISM* BY *SPRINKLING*, AND THE *RIGHT*

OF *INFANTS* TO THAT *ORDINANCE*,

SUPPORTED AND DEFENDED IN

TWO DISCOURSES,

Delivered at Malden,

IN THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR 1804.

OCCASIONED

BY THE SETTING UP OF A *BAPTIST SOCIETY*

IN THAT PLACE.

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ACTS x. 47.

CAN ANY MAN FORBID WATER, THAT THESE SHOULD NOT BE BAPTIZED, WHICH HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST, AS WELL AS WE ?

WHILE Peter was preaching the goſpel ſalvation to Cornelius and his aſſembled friends, the Holy Ghoſt fell upon the hearers in a manner ſo viſible and ſtriking, as nearly to reſemble what had before happened to the apoſtles themſelves on the day of Pentecoſt. Obſerving this, Peter immediately propoſes, in the words now read, the admiſſion of theſe new converts to a regular ſtanding in the chriſtian church, by the ordinance inſtituted for that purpoſe. As they had already been baptized by the Holy Ghoſt, the water baptiſm, which they were now to receive, was intended as an outward ſeal or token of what they had inwardly experienced. The *one* was the immediate gift of God, producing a real change in the heart, purging it from ſin and dead works, and bringing it to *the answer of a good conſcience toward God ;* the *other* was to be the work of man, and, of itſelf, could avail to nothing more than *the purifying of the flesh.* As a divine inſtitution, however, rendered ſignificant by the command of God, its obſervance becomes indiſpenſably incumbent.

From the beginning, it hath pleaſed God, that they who acknowledge him, and embrace the true religion, ſhould, by ſome viſible mark or token, be ſeparated and diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of mankind. When he admitted the patriarch Abraham and his family into a covenant relation to himſelf, and gave him that emphatical and comprehenſive promiſe, *to be a God to him, and to his seed after him*, chooſing them for his peculiar people; he condeſcended to confirm the engagement by an ordinance, which was to continue a ſtanding memorial of his promiſe to them, and of their ſpecial obligations to him. He was pleaſed to ſay, *This is my covenant*, or the ſenſible ſign of it, *every man child among you shall be circumcised——and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* By this ſignificant rite, they were dedicated to God, and diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the world, as his church and people. At the ſame time that it ſerved as a pledge of the faithfulneſs of God in fulfilling his promiſes to them, it tended to remind them of their duty to him, of their obligations to purity of heart and life, and to perſeverance in a courſe of holy obedience to his will. During the continuance of the Old-Teſtament diſpenſation, theſe purpoſes were anſwered by circumciſion. But, on the publication of the goſpel and the introduction of the Gentiles into the church, it pleaſed God to lay aſide this bloody rite, and ſubſtitute baptiſm as an initiatory ſeal of his covenant. *Go ye, and disciple all nations, baptizing them*,—was

the final charge of Chriſt to his apoſtles. As many as ſhould receive the goſpel were, by baptiſm, to be made viſible diſciples and members of the chriſtian church. As *Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised;* ſo Cornelius and his friends received baptiſm as a ſeal of what they had already experienced in the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit. Neither the one ordinance or the other did, of itſelf, convey faith or any other inward grace to the ſubjects of it; but denoted their regular entrance into the viſible church and covenant relation to God as his profeſſing people. As the one denoted a relation to the Jewiſh church, ſo the other denotes a relation to the Chriſtian church. In this reſpect, both rites have the ſame import, and were evidently intended for the ſame purpoſe. As circumciſion was not to be repeated or adminiſtered more than once to the ſame ſubject, ſo neither is baptiſm. In all the eſſential meanings therefore of the two rites, the one evidently ſucceeds the other, and was, probably, prefigured by it in the ſame manner as the Lord's ſupper, called the chriſtian paſſover, was prefigured, under the law, by the Jewiſh paſſover. In a more general ſenſe, baptiſm may be underſtood as ſignificant of all the eſſential duties and privileges of the chriſtian profeſſion. *As many of you*, ſays St. Paul to the Galatians, *as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ:* Your baptiſm denotes your ſubmiſſion to

Chriſt in his mediatorial character, and your title to the bleſſings of his purchaſe, the waſhing away both of the guilt and pollution of your ſins through faith in his blood, your ſeparation from an unbelieving and ſinful world, to be his peculiar people, and your incorporation into his myſtical body, to walk with them in newneſs of life. In confirmation of this general import of baptiſm, referring to the things ſignified by it, the apoſtle adds, *by one ſpirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free.*

With reſpect to the manner in which the ordinance ought to be adminiſtered; the form of words to be uſed on the occaſion, is preſcribed by our Lord himſelf,—*baptizing them in*, or *into, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* To be baptized into the name of another, denotes our taking that other perſon, for our maſter, and our ſtanding in the relation of ſcholars or diſciples to him. This we learn from that query to the Corinthians, *were ye baptized into the name of Paul?* They were called *John's diſciples*, whom John had baptized; and when the ſame perſons afterwards became the diſciples of Chriſt, they were again baptized *in the name of Chriſt*, or, *of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*, thereby profeſſing their ſubjection to that religion which God revealed by his Son, and confirmed by his Spirit. So long as this baptiſmal form of words be repeated, with the waſhing of water by the regularly authorized miniſters of the goſpel,

and the whole ceremony is conducted with decency, piety and devotion; we may safely conclude hat whatever is essential to the institution, is duly observed.

As for the opinion of those who look upon it essential to baptism, that a person be plunged all over in the water; when they act herein according to their serious and best judgment, we censure them not. We are content that our brethren should understand the scriptures for themselves. Nay, we allow that some plausible things may be said in favour of immersion. We only request that *they* would judge as favourably of us, who have as much to say for ourselves as they, and, we think, somewhat more than they. The language of the text is evidently in favour of our mode of administration. Had Peter entertained the idea of plunging Cornelius and his friends, would he not have said, "can any forbid our going forth to a bath or pool?" or, "can any forbid that these should be put into the water that they may be baptized?" But, instead of this, he uses a form of speech which, I presume, no Baptist minister ever did adopt on such an occasion; he expresses himself in the very words which, we should expect, one of our ministers would have done under similar circumstances, *can any man forbid water*, that is, forbid its being brought into the room? Is not this the most natural and obvious meaning—an idea which the form of words and mode of expression instantly and fully excite in our minds? Accordingly, there is no hint of their going abroad, or of any

other preparation in order to their being baptized, but that of bringing a little water into the room. The hiſtory leads us to believe, that it was performed at the very juncture when Peter propoſed it, and in the very apartment in which they were then aſſembled. To me, indeed, this appears the only mode in which the ordinance can be adminiſtered conſiſtently with that order, decency and devotion which the goſpel expreſsly requires in the whole deportment of a worſhipping aſſembly. Their leaving the place of worſhip, ſtreaming away in the open air, to ſome pond or river, and in all ſeaſons and climates, changing their apparel in order to their being totally immerſed in the water, out of which they come drenched and ſhivering; theſe circumſtances are ſuch an interruption of devotion, and are neceſſarily attended with ſuch inconvenience, irregularity and confuſion, as are, in my view, utterly inconſiſtent with *the beauty of holiness*, with that decorum and propriety which become the houſe of God forever. I never ſee a baptiſm thus conducted, without thinking of the ſuperſtitious fooleries of paganiſm or popery; it ſurely has not the appearance of that *reasonable ſervice* preſcribed in the goſpel.

The great Head of the church requires water to be uſed in baptiſm, and bread and wine in the euchariſt; but the preciſe quantity of theſe elements as pertaining to each ordinance, and the modes of adminiſtering them, ſeem to be left to the diſcretion of his members. To me it would appear as

reaſonable to deny the Lord's ſupper to be celebrated by thoſe who make not a full meal on the occaſion, as to deny thoſe to have been baptized who did not paſs wholly under the water. In all probability, our mode of celebrating the Supper is as different from that of the primitive chriſtians, as is our mode of baptiſm; yet we have no reaſon to doubt of the divine acceptance in either of theſe ordinances, when we ſeriouſly and conſcientiouſly obſerve them. In the diſcourſes of our Saviour, and in the writings of his apoſtles, we are cautioned againſt a diſplay of zeal about forms, againſt an over ſcrupulous exactneſs in the things pertaining to the outſide of religion. Great preciſion in theſe matters is frequently accompanied with a faulty negligence in things more weighty and important. *Bodily exercise*, we are told, *profiteth but little.* We read of ſome, who, though very exact in ceremonial obſervances, in diverſe waſhings, and in making clean the outſide, are yet cenſured for their inward pollution; who, while in ſome inſtances, they ſeemed to *ſtrain at a gnat*, in others, would *ſwallow a camel.* To me nothing appears more incredible, than that the only way to heaven, ſhould be by paſſing under the water; or, that a perſon plunged in the ocean, ſhould be, in the ſight of God, a whit freer from moral defilement, than another upon whoſe face a little water only has been poured or ſprinkled. In my view, and ſo far as I am capable of judging from the ſcriptures, the quantity of water uſed in the adminiſtration of

the ordinance, is a circumſtance of ſuch indifference that I ſhould not think it a ſubject worthy of any ſerious diſcuſſion, did not our brethren of the Baptiſt perſuaſion deny the validity of our mode; and acting upon this principle, withhold communion from us, thereby treating us as unchriſtened heathens, aliens from the church and covenant of God. Should one of our members, though of a character the moſt exemplary and reſpectable, requeſt communion with them, he would be refuſed, unleſs he would firſt ſuffer them to plunge him in the water. His plea of having been baptized already in a way which he judges to be agreeable to the ſcriptures, would avail him nothing. They would anſwer, that he muſt ſubmit to it in *their* way, or he could not be received. Each individual whom they can perſuade to renounce his former baptiſm, by being thus baptized over again, they conſider as recovered from a ſtate of heatheniſm. Theſe proſelytes from other churches, they reckon as ſo many additions to the church of Chriſt, and his kingdom to be extended in proportion to the numbers *thus* obtained. Of courſe, they would rejoice in the overthrow of all the other churches around them, in hope, from the general wreck, to collect materials for their own. Nor do they fail to take advantage of any neighbouring ſociety when it happens to be ſhaken by diviſions. Whatever falls adrift on ſuch occaſions, is uſually ſecured by them.

If ſome individuals among them form honour-

able exceptions from this narrowneſs and bigotry ; ſtill, cloſe communion, zeal in proſelyting from other ſocieties, and the re-baptizing of all their proſelytes, being the diſcriminating ſpirit of their ſect, all other chriſtians are excluded from goſpel union and fellowſhip with them. To the making of this diviſion in the kingdom of our Redeemer, and the ſetting up of this wall of partition, they are led by a principle, in its own nature, the ſource of unceaſing diſcord ; I mean, their claim of an excluſive right to interpret the ſcriptures, and to impoſe *their* ſenſe of them upon all believers. Nothing ſurely ſhort of infallibility, can ſupport ſuch a claim. It reſts preciſely upon the ſame baſis on which the hierarchy of the Romiſh church is built. Like that, it infringes the right of private judgment, and deſtroys the equality which Chriſt ordained among his followers.—Confident as we are, that our mode of baptiſm is more ſcriptural than their's, as well as more convenient, becoming, and ſuitable to the nature of religion and the purpoſes of devotion ; ſtill we are far from calling in queſtion the validity of their's ; nay, in condeſcenſion to the conſciences of thoſe who requeſt it, our miniſters ſcruple not to baptize by immerſion. Were they equally liberal and candid, *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* might be preſerved, and all clamour, ſtrife, and diviſion, happily prevented. Upon whom, then, does the guilt of theſe evils lie ?

Is our reverence for a divine inſtitution to be

meaſured by the quantity of water in which we are baptized? Does *ſuch* a circumſtance form the eſſence of our obedience to Chriſt? The laws of morality are, indeed, unalterable; but ritual laws, deriving their whole authority from poſitive inſtitution, may be ſuſpended or varied when a concurrence of circumſtances renders them impracticable or extremely inconvenient. In ſuch caſes, "the letter of the law yields to the intention of the lawgiver, which was not to burden and diſtreſs any one by minute and ſcrupulous ordinances." Such variation was actually practiſed in the Jewiſh church, with reſpect to the ordinance of circumciſion, the law of the ſabbath, of the annual feaſts, of ſacrifices, and of ceremonies in general. By parity of reaſon, the ritual precepts of the goſpel are to be thus accommodated to the circumſtances of chriſtians. While our Saviour ſeverely cenſured the Scribes and Phariſees for their rigorous interpretations of the ceremonial precepts of their law, and the accumulated burdens thereby added to that ancient yoke; he ſpake of his own yoke as eaſy, and diſcovered a diſpoſition to make it ſo, in his tender regard for the health and comfort of his diſciples. When the latter were accuſed of violating the ſanctity of the ſabbath, by plucking ſome ears of corn to ſatisfy their hunger on that day; he juſtified them by ſhowing that mercy is before ſacrifice, and moral conſiderations ſuperior to ritual obſervances. Can we then ſuppoſe that he would require bap-

tiſm by immerſion, in all ſeaſons and climates, and under all circumſtances of health and conſtitution in his miniſters and people ? His obſervation on the occaſion juſt referred to, that *the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*, applies, with all its force, to this inſtitution ; baptiſm was made for man, and is therefore to be adminiſtered in a way the moſt ſuitable and profitable to him ; and not man for baptiſm, ſo that he ſhould be obliged to ſubmit to it in a form diſtracting to his thoughts and dangerous to his health.

In the warm climates of the eaſt where baptiſm was firſt inſtituted, bathing was a common and a refreſhing exerciſe ; but the difference of climate in theſe northern regions, renders the idea of it, through a great part of the year, ſhocking to the feelings of moſt people. We are exhorted to *attend upon the Lord without distraction.* That mode of adminiſtering every ordinance, and of performing every act of religion, is always to be preferred which is the moſt ſubſervient to the exerciſe of devout affections. But where is the perſon, who could receive baptiſm by immerſion without having his thoughts wholly deranged, his mind ſo agitated, and his ſpirits ſo fluttered, as to render him utterly incapable of thoſe devotional exerciſes which ought always to attend ſo ſolemn an ordinance. This reaſon alone, in modern times and cold countries, would be ſufficient, on thoſe ſcrip-

ture grounds already exhibited, to juſtify an alteration in the mode, were it a certain fact that immerſion was the primitive practice.

There is another conſideration not wholly unworthy of attention. The increaſe of knowledge and of the arts of civilization and refinement, in modern times, have eſtabliſhed ideas of propriety and decency, very different from thoſe which prevailed in the rude ages of antiquity. The ſcripture abounds with general cautions not to offend againſt theſe ideas. Our Lord himſelf, in many inſtances, "paid a condeſcending regard to the genius and cuſtoms of the people among whom he lived;" and his apoſtles after him, have enjoined it upon chriſtians to *provide things honest* and decent *in the ſight of all men*, and to *give none offence, either to Jew or Gentile, or the church of God.* Baptiſm by immerſion, might not, perhaps, eighteen hundred years ago, be offenſive in Judea, nor can we ſay that it would diſguſt the uncultivated and unclothed inhabitants of the ſouth of Africa even now, but it is certain, that the cuſtom of plunging mixed multitudes of men and women, either in thin veſtments, or in their uſual dreſs, is deemed indecorous by moſt people accuſtomed to poliſhed manners. If St. Paul, referring to the cuſtoms then prevailing in the cities of Greece, pronounced it *uncomely* for a woman to be ſeen worſhipping God, *uncovered;* "profeſſing chriſtians

in general, and women in particular, ſhould ſee to it that they have the authority of an expreſs command of Chriſt, before they ſubmit to be thus plunged in water, with all the ſolemnity of a chriſtian inſtitution," in the preſence of a congregation conſiſting of both ſexes and of all characters, leſt they offend ſome, and give occaſion to others to ſpeak evil of the goſpel and of its divine Author.

But where will they find his expreſs command, ſo neceſſary to their juſtification, and to the ſupport of their character for modeſty and a delicacy of manners? For myſelf I can ſafely ſay, that I have never met with it, though it be now more than thirty years ſince I began the habit of reading the ſcriptures in their original languages. Every perſon who has the like acquaintance with them, well knows that the Greek word for baptiſm, ſignifies any kind of waſhing, by ſprinkling and affuſion, as often, if not much oftener, than by dipping. The primitive word of which it is derived, is uſed in the *Septuagint* tranſlation of the Old Teſtament, to denote the falling of the dew upon Nebuchadnezzar. What we read, " was *wet* with the dew of heaven," is there, *baptized* with the dew of heaven. Of the Iſraelites, it is ſaid, 1 Corinthians x. 2. that they " were all *baptized* unto Moſes in the cloud, and in the ſea." If theſe words have any reference to water baptiſm, they ſurely cannot mean that Moſes plunged all the millions of people whom he led forth out of Egypt. This, in-

deed, was true of the Egyptian hoſt purſuing after them, when the floods returned upon them, the depths covered them, and they ſank, as lead, in the mighty waters. But, of the Iſraelites, it is ſaid, *they walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea.* The only way therefore, in which they could have been baptized, muſt have been by their receiving a ſprinkling from the cloud, hovering over them, or a ſpray from the waters ſtanding, as a wall, on each ſide of them. In Mark vii. 4. we read, "when they (the Phariſees) come from the market, except they *waſh*," (in the Greek, *be baptized*) "they eat not." This is mentioned in order to account for their complaining of our Lord's diſciples *for eating bread with unwashen hands.* In the language of ſcripture therefore, a man is ſaid to be *baptized* when his hands only are waſhed; and what the Jewiſh mode of waſhing the hands was, we may learn from what is ſaid of Eliſha, that *he poured water upon the hands of Elijah.* If pouring water upon the hands, be baptiſm in the ſcripture ſenſe, can our Baptiſt brethren tell us, why pouring it upon the face may not be ſo too? It is added concerning the Phariſees, in the paſſage now cited, "and many other things they hold, as the *waſhings* (in the Greek *the baptizings*) of cups, and pots, brazen veſſels and of tables." Now, as theſe baptizings, both of their hands, and of their common utenſils, and the furniture of their houſes, were performed as religious ceremonies; we have

the higheſt reaſon to believe that they were done by ſprinkling; for this is the mode expreſsly required for accidental uncleanneſſes in Numb. xix. 18. "a clean perſon ſhall take hyſſop, and dip it in water, and *ſprinkle* it upon the tent, and upon all the veſſels, and upon the perſons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one ſlain, or one dead, or a grave." In cleanſing the leper alſo, the prieſt was directed to "*ſprinkle* upon him ſeven times." By ſprinkling too, perſons and things were conſecrated to the ſervice of God. Thus "Moſes took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle, and all that was therein, to ſanctify them." And "he *ſprinkled* thereof upon the altar ſeven times——and poured it upon Aaron's head,—to ſanctify him." The ſame ceremony was obſerved with the blood of the ſacrifice: "Moſes *ſprinkled* upon the altar round about, and took Aaron and his ſons, and put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, the thumbs of their right hands, and the great toes of their right feet." The covenant between God and his people was alſo ratified by *ſprinkling*: "He took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and ſcarlet wool, and hyſſop, and *ſprinkled* both the book and all the people;——he *ſprinkled* likewiſe both the tabernacle, and all the veſſels of the miniſtry." Now theſe divers ſprinklings are, in Heb. ix. 10. called *divers baptisms*. In our tranſlation, the words are *divers waſhings*, but in the Greek, *divers bap-*

tisms. The aſſertion therefore, ſo often repeated and ſo ſtrenuouſly maintained, " that ſprinkling is not baptizing," is, in direct terms, a contradiction of the word of God. According to our Baptiſt brethren, the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews ought " not to have uſed the word *baptisms*, unleſs the people, the book of the law, and the tabernacle itſelf, had been dipped in blood or in water.—He has however called them *baptisms*, though they were only ſprinkled; and therefore we not only may, but ought to call ſprinkling baptizing." It will, I believe, be difficult to find a ſingle paſſage in ſcripture, which ſo fully authorizes us to give the name to immerſion. At preſent, I am unable to recollect a ſingle ſentence in the whole Bible, in which immerſion is the certain and expreſs meaning of the word *baptism.*

As for thoſe examples of baptiſms recorded in ſcripture, which are ſuppoſed to have been adminiſtered by immerſion, they are not related in ſuch a manner as to leave no room for doubt with reſpect to the mode. We read, indeed, in our Engliſh tranſlation, that " Jeſus was baptized by John in Jordan; and then came up *out* of the water;—and that the eunuch went down *into* the water with Philip, and when he was baptized, they came up *out* of the water." But whoever is capable of reading theſe paſſages in the original Greek, muſt know that they might, with equal propriety, have been rendered,—" they went down *to*—were bap-

tized *at*—and came up *from*, the water." Or, admitting that they ſtepped into the water, ſtill this is no proof that they were plunged in it. In thoſe warm regions, they might ſtep into the edge of the water, when the deſign was only to ſprinkle or pour a handful of water on the face.

Great ſtreſs is laid upon John's baptizing in or at Jordan. By the way, however, it ought to be remembered that his baptiſm was not the ordinance afterward inſtituted by Chriſt, nor was it adminiſtered in his name. Its main intention was to denote the repentance and reformation neceſſary to prepare the people for his ſpeedy reception. As John was of the line of the prieſts, and accuſtomed to the obſervances peculiarly enjoined upon them, we are led to ſuppoſe that he might take the hint for baptizing at a river or current of water, from an order in the Levitical law, *to ſprinkle the leper over running water in order to his cleansing.* But, inaſmuch as it is ſaid, that John baptized in Enon, *because there was much water there*, it has been concluded that he did it by immerſion. This however ſeems to be a haſty concluſion, ſupported by no other circumſtance but the mention of *much water*. The words might be rendered *many ſtreams* or *rivulets*. Accordingly travellers, who have examined the ſpot, report that "they conſiſt of ſprings and a brook that a man might ſtep over." It is not ſaid that John choſe this ſituation for the convenience of plunging his hearers. This is

mere conjecture ; and if we attend to the circumſtances of the hiſtory, we may conjecture another reaſon, in my view, more probable. The greater part of John's life was ſpent in the ſolitude of a dry and barren wilderneſs ; and when he entered on his public miniſtration, *there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.* This deſcription gives us the idea of vaſt multitudes, not only from the metropolis, but from many other cities, towns, and villages, throughout the land, travelling on mules, aſſes, camels, and all the various beaſts of carriage. In a country where the inhabitants were ſo frequently diſtreſſed for the want of water, it was abſolutely neceſſary that John ſhould meet this immenſe concourſe of people in a ſituation like that in the neighbourhood of Enon, whoſe many ſtreams, in that ſultry climate, might ſerve for their refreſhment. As thouſands were continually flocking in, and as thoſe who had come from a diſtance would probably tarry ſome days, had there not been *much water* in the place, they would preſently have been in danger of ſuffering. We may now appeal to the common ſenſe of any perſon, whoſe mind is not blinded by prejudice, whether this be not a more natural and probable account for the mention of *much water*, than that which would repreſent John as ſtanding up to his waiſt in a river from morning to night, and this, day after day, plunging a mixed multitude of all ages and ſexes ?

Did he plunge them naked ? or did he ſend them home dripping in their clothes ? or did they bring change of raiment from home with them, though, in all probability, few of them had any thought of being baptized, till after they had heard him preach ? The hiſtory is totally ſilent with reſpect to all theſe ſuppoſitions ; and, in my view, to believe either of them, is contrary to common ſenſe and common decency, and even carries a reflection upon ſacred ſcripture.

There is an expreſſion, occurring once or twice in the writings of St. Paul, which ſeems to have full poſſeſſion of the imagination of our Baptiſt brethren, and renders them poſitive that immerſion was the primitive mode of baptiſm. It is found in Romans vi. 4. " We are *buried* with him in baptiſm into death ;" and again in Coloſſians ii. 12. " *buried* with him in baptiſm, wherein alſo ye are riſen with him through the faith." But in order to infer immerſion from theſe texts, they ſhould firſt prove that baptiſm was inſtituted as a memorial of Chriſt's burial and reſurrection ; and when they have proved this, they ought to adminiſter it after the Euchariſt which celebrates his death, and repeat the one as often as they do the other : For, no reaſon can be aſſigned, why we ſhould commemorate the death of Chriſt every month or two, and his burial and reſurrection but once in our lives. Into ſuch abſurdities do people precipitate themſelves by ſuffering their imagina-

tions to become the interpreters of ſcripture. If they would lay their fancies aſide, and let their reaſon judge of the meaning of theſe texts, they would, at once, ſee that, in them, there is no alluſion to any mode of baptiſm. In each of theſe paſſages, the apoſtle is treating of that great moral change, which conſiſts in putting off the old man with his luſts, dying unto ſin, and reviving unto righteouſneſs, into a new and holy life reſembling that of Chriſt. As the principles of this great change originate in the *waſhing of regeneration* and *the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*; as, by their baptiſm, believers profeſs ſuch an inward renovation to have paſſed upon their hearts, and receive that ordinance as a ſign and ſeal of it; for this reaſon, the apoſtle mentions their baptiſm as what had laid them under obligation to ceaſe from their old evil habits and corrupt converſation as entirely, as they who are buried ceaſe from among the living. In the ſame ſenſe in which we are ſaid to be *buried* with Chriſt in baptiſm, we are alſo ſaid to be *crucified* with Chriſt, to *die* and to *riſe* with Chriſt. All theſe expreſſions refer to the ſame thing, our being *created anew in Chriſt unto good works*; and this is what our baptiſm denotes. Its mode of adminiſtration, therefore, refers as much to the crucifixion and death of Chriſt, as to his burial; but, in reality, has no direct alluſion to either.

Having conſidered ſome of thoſe examples of baptiſm and paſſages of ſcripture, which have been thought the moſt favourable to immerſion; I ſhall now ſet before you ſome others, in which the probability is evidently againſt that mode. In Acts ii. 41, we read, *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* This was the day of Pentecoſt, on which the Holy Ghoſt was poured forth upon the apoſtles, and they began to ſpeak in different tongues. It was at a grand feſtival, when Jeruſalem was filled with foreign Jews, proſelytes and ſtrangers from all the different countries and nations into which the Iſraelites had been diſperſed. The report of what had happened to the apoſtles, collected a great aſſembly, who came running together, aſtoniſhed at hearing themſelves addreſſed by apparently unlearned men, in each of thoſe different languages which were peculiar to their reſpective countries. At length, Peter ſo gained the general attention as to deliver a long diſcourſe. The effect of it was, the converſion of about three thouſand of this mixed multitude, who were all immediately baptized. Now, they who think that it was done by immerſion, ſhould inform us, where the apoſtles found conveniences for the purpoſe in the midſt of an hoſtile city; how they guarded againſt the tumult and danger to which ſuch a procedure muſt have expoſed them in the preſence of an aſ-

ſembled nation, the bulk of whom, and all their rulers, civil and religious, were violent oppoſers; and if plunging men and women naked, would have been indecent, they ſhould alſo inform us, by what means theſe new converts, the moſt of whom were probably ſtrangers from diſtant parts, provided themſelves, at ſo ſhort a warning, with ſuitable changes of apparel; and laſtly, how the twelve apoſtles, the work being diſtributed among them, got through the labour of plunging ſeveral hundreds apiece, after having received a confeſſion of faith from each of them; and all this in one day, which day ſeems to have been far advanced before any of this buſineſs was entered upon. Until theſe difficulties and improbabilities can be cleared up, we ſhall continue to believe that the three thouſand were baptized in a way more expeditious than by that of immerſion.

In Acts ix. 17, 18, 19, we thus read, "Annanias went his way, and entered into the houſe; and putting his hands on him, ſaid, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jeſus, that appeared unto thee in the way, hath ſent me, that thou mighteſt receive thy ſight, and be filled with the Holy Ghoſt. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been ſcales: and he received ſight forthwith, and aroſe and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was ſtrengthened." Is there a ſingle circumſtance in this account of Saul's baptiſm, that would lead one to ſuſpect that he was plunged?

Does not the whole tranſaction appear to have paſſed in the houſe where he lodged, and in a very ſhort time? Three days had elapſed ſince he had lain blind, aſtoniſhed, and, beyond conception, agitated in mind; during which ſpace of three days, he had neither ate nor drank. Worn down by ſo long faſting and by conſternation of mind, equally weakening and wearing to the ſpirits, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that by this time, he had ſcarcely ſtrength to raiſe himſelf up in his bed; and as his baptiſm is expreſsly mentioned as previous to his receiving any refreſhment, is it probable that Annanias would have taken him, in his preſent exhauſted and debilitated condition, out to a river or pond, or in any other way ſubjected him to the ſhock of immerſion? They who make ſuch ſtrange ſuppoſitions to ſupply what is not hinted at in ſcripture, muſt, I think, conceive of the apoſtles and firſt chriſtians as beings very different from what reaſonable men are found to be in modern times.

Equally improbable is it that the jailor and his houſehold, mentioned in Acts xvi. were baptized by immerſion. For this ſeems to have been done in the middle of the night. The apoſtles, Paul and Silas, had been committed to his cuſtody. Having received a charge unuſually ſtrict, he thruſt them into the inner priſon, and made their feet faſt in the ſtocks. At midnight, a great earthquake ſhook the priſon to its foundations; *all the*

doors flew open, and every one's bands were loosed. The keeper awoke in a great fright, and was about to diſpatch himſelf. But when he perceived that the priſoners had not made their eſcape, nor were diſpoſed to attempt it, his opinion of them was ſuddenly altered. A very different concern took poſſeſſion of his mind. Having brought them out of the dungeon, or from what is called the inner priſon, with the deepeſt humility, he inquired of them the way of ſalvation. They directed him to faith in Chriſt, and, ſays the hiſtory, "ſpake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his houſe. And he took them the ſame hour of the night, and waſhed their ſtripes; and was baptized, he and all his, ſtraightway." Is there a ſingle hint in this account which can give us the idea of immerſion? Nay, with what eyes muſt *they* look at this paſſage of ſcripture, who can ſee the jailor with his whole family, and his priſoners, whom he was charged to keep at his peril, and whoſe backs were covered with blood and wounds from their ſevere ſcourging—having been beaten with rods, and received many ſtripes but a few hours before;—all this company thus circumſtanced, turning out at midnight, groping their way in the dark, or going with lanterns, or torches, to a river or pool, no one knows where—through a city, juſt waked up by a great earthquake, and the ſtreets probably filled with the terrified inhabitants? Would Paul and Silas have done ſuch a thing? As was obſerved before, ſuch repreſentations

make the apoſtles to have acted a ſtrange and unaccountable part, inconſiſtent not only with reaſon and common ſenſe, but with themſelves; for we find, in the morning, that they refuſed to leave the priſon, till the magiſtrates came themſelves to take them out. How abſurd, then, is the ſuppoſition of their having gone abroad in the night, to plunge their converts? Do not all the circumſtances mentioned in this hiſtory, tend ſtrongly to confirm us in the belief that the jailor and his family were baptized by ſprinkling or affuſion?

That this was the mode in which the ordinance was adminiſtered to Cornelius and his friends, we have already ſhown the language of the text to be a proof nearly as deciſive, as it would have been if the very word *ſprinkling* had been uſed. As theſe perſons are repreſented as baptized in the place where they were then aſſembled; ſo, there is not a ſingle inſtance among all the numerous baptiſms mentioned in ſcripture, of a perſon's going from the place where he happened to be when he requeſted it, to any river, ſtream, pool or bath, in order to his receiving the ordinance. All thoſe perſons who are ſaid to be baptized in or at any river, or other collection of water, were by ſuch waters at the time when they firſt offered themſelves to baptiſm. If, upon any occaſion, there was more water than would have been neceſſary for ſprinkling, this was a matter of mere accident, and not a circumſtance that was ever ſought after,

or the leaſt pains taken to obtain. But had immerſion been the univerſal practice, and eſſential to the due adminiſtration of the ordinance in all ages and climates; is it credible that all the writers of the New Teſtament ſhould have obſerved ſuch profound ſilence on the ſubject? They might have inſiſted upon it in terms ſo explicit, that no honeſt inquirer could have miſtook their meaning. On the contrary, they have actually recommended *ſprinkling* in the repreſentations which they have given us of the things ſignified by baptiſm. Theſe principally conſiſt in our *juſtification through faith in the blood of Chriſt*, and in our ſanctification by his Spirit.

With reſpect to the former, we read that Jeſus Chriſt *hath waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.* As a token of our being thus waſhed, we are directed to waſh with water in baptiſm. *Now, why tarriest thou?* ſays Annanias to Saul; *arise, and be baptized, and waſh away thy ſins.* That blood, by which we are waſhed, and which actually *cleanſes from all ſin*, is, with reference to its application to believers, expreſsly called *the blood of ſprinkling.* It was of old typified by the blood of the paſchal lamb, *ſprinkled* on the houſes of the Iſraelites in Egypt, for their protection from the angel of death. It was alſo typified by the *ſprinkling* of the blood of all the numerous ſacrifices under the law. "If," ſays the writer to the Hebrews, "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the

aſhes of an heifer *ſprinkling* the unclean, ſanctifieth to the purifying of the fleſh; how much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt purge your conſcience from dead works?" Again in 1 Peter i. 2. chriſtians are mentioned as "elected through ſanctification of the Spirit, and *ſprinkling* of the blood of Jeſus Chriſt." Can any tell us, or is it poſſible for any to imagine, why the application of the blood of Chriſt to believers was, under the law, typified by ſuch manifold *ſprinklings;* and in the goſpel is thus repeatedly called *the blood of ſprinkling*, unleſs it be in alluſion to baptiſm, its ſign and ſeal?

In regard to the other part of our ſalvation by Chriſt—our ſanctification by his Spirit; in what forms of ſpeech is the gift of the Holy Spirit, for this purpoſe, ſet forth? In what part of the Bible will you find the uncouth language of plunging or dipping into the Holy Ghoſt, or words of a like confuſed and unintelligible import? Yet we know that baptiſm is the outward ſign of regeneration, of *the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*, which, ſays the apoſtle, *he ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt. Shedding*, *pouring out*, or *ſprinkling*, are the uſual terms by which the donation of the Holy Spirit to chriſtians is expreſſed. Thus, in our context, *on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of of the Holy Ghoſt.* The language alſo of the many promiſes in the Old Teſtament, foretelling this bleſſing, is not, "I will *dip* or *plunge* you in clean

water, and ye ſhall be clean;"—but, "I will *ſprinkle* clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean."—"My ſervant, (meaning the Meſſiah) ſhall *ſprinkle* many nations."—"I will *pour* water upon him that is thirſty."—"I will *pour* my Spirit upon thy ſeed, and my bleſſing upon thine offſpring." Do our Baptiſt brethren inquire after our ſcripture warrant for *ſprinkling?* Are not the many paſſages of ſcripture now mentioned, and many others, of ſimilar import, which might be mentioned, warrant ſufficient, full and ample, as we could wiſh?

"Some are fond of being baptized by immerſion, becauſe in that form only the whole body is waſhed with water.—How, ſay they, can it be ſaid that a perſon is baptized with water, when only a little water has been ſprinkled or poured upon his face? We may anſwer this queſtion by propoſing another, viz. How could the apoſtles be ſaid to be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire, when the celeſtial fire reſted only upon their heads? We have an account of that event in Acts ii. 3. *There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and ſat upon each of them.* John, the forerunner of Chriſt, foretelling that deſcent of the Spirit, ſays, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me, ſhall baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire." If thoſe were baptized with fire, upon whoſe heads only the fire reſted, thoſe are equally baptized with water, who have water

ſprinkled or poured upon their faces. Examine the words of John in both ſenſes. If you ſuppoſe them alluding to immerſion, you explain them thus: *As I baptize you unto repentance by plunging you in the water, ſo he that cometh after me, ſhall baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt by pouring it, in the likeneſs of cloven tongues of fire, upon your heads.*—But conſider him as alluding to the cuſtom of baptizing, by pouring water upon the head or face, his language is, "As I pour water upon you in my baptiſm, ſo ſhall Jeſus, ere long, baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt, pouring it down upon you as in ſtreams of fire."—We need not aſk which is the moſt natural conſtruction of the words? But there is reaſon to aſk, why ſhould any require the plunging of the whole body in baptiſm? We have ſearched the New Teſtament, from beginning to end, without finding any certain proof of either precept or example to enforce the requiſition. But we have found, in anſwer to Peter's requeſt to be waſhed all over, not his feet only, but his hands and his head, our Lord ſaying, *he that is waſhed*, i. e. ſpiritually, by regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, *needeth not, ſave to waſh his feet, but is clean every whit;*—words which, if conſidered as referring to baptiſm, are concluſive againſt the need of a total immerſion. They probably led Peter, many years after, when having ſaid, *Baptism doth now ſave us*, to add the following explanation, *not the putting*

away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God. The *latter* is the baptism which saves us, and this indeed is essentially necessary, without which, the former, baptism in any mode, and every other ordinance, will avail us nothing. They upon whose minds this truth is duly impressed, and who have a proper concern about the things signified by baptism, will not, I think, be very scrupulous about the mode or form of its administration.

The stress which our Baptist brethren appear to lay upon this, and their narrow and uncharitable spirit manifested in excluding all other christians from their communion, are, in my view, their greatest and least excusable mistakes. Doth water commend us to God? Are we to be saved or lost according as a greater or less quantity of this element has been used in our baptism? Or does the discrimination consist in our being dipped in it, or having it poured or sprinkled upon us? Is this a difference of so momentous a nature, of such solemn importance, as to mark those who receive it in the *one* form as belonging to the kingdom of heaven, to the exclusion of those who receive it in the *other;* destroying all brotherly relation between them, rendering them incapable of using the means of grace together, causing the division of religious societies, the breaking up of churches, and the desertion of gospel-called and regularly ordained pastors? Are these circumstances proofs of a reviv-

al of religion ? Do they proceed from that Spirit, whoſe fruits are love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, meekneſs ? My brethren, there is another and a very different Spirit which, ſometimes, under the guiſe of religion, gets poſſeſſion of the minds of men, and renders them on a ſudden, remarkably zealous, not indeed of good works, but of innovation, for ſome new mode or form by which they think to ſecure heaven in a way more expeditious than that by which their pious anceſtors aſcended thither. *Beloved,* the goſpel warns you *not to believe every ſpirit, but to try the ſpirits whether they are of God ; for many falſe prophets are gone out into the world.* Like the maſter to whom they belong, " they go to and fro in the earth, and walk up and down in it." They creep into houſes, and lead away ſilly women ; throwing darkneſs upon their underſtandings, and prejudices and evil ſurmiſes into their hearts. Their ſubſiſtence, as well as their popularity and the eſtimation to which they aſpire, depend upon their ſucceſs in ſowing diſcord among brethren, ſtirring up a party ſpirit, making diviſions, and thereby advancing the cauſe of ſuperſtition and bigotry. " By their fruits ye ſhall know them." Are there any who " would ſour and leaven your minds with uncharitableneſs ; who would lead you away from the ſcriptures, to follow enthuſiaſtic impreſſions and impulſes ; who endeavour to perſuade by noiſe and clamour, and

fierceneſs, and ſtriking the paſſions, inſtead of enlightening the underſtanding by plain ſcripture, and fair calm reaſoning; any that endeavour to move men from their ſteadfaſtneſs, by flatteries, or cenſures, by confidence, by pitying the blindneſs of others, or boaſting of their own illuminations? Such as theſe you have reaſon to be cautious of hearkening unto. Take heed that you be not impoſed on with chaff, inſtead of wheat; with vain dreams and hurtful prejudices, inſtead of divine truths. Make the ſcriptures the rule of your religion, according to the plain and natural interpretation of them; and let it be your care conſcientiouſly to practiſe agreeably to what you have already learned of the will of God. This is a good preſervative againſt dangerous miſtakes, and being carried about with divers and ſtrange doctrines." *If any man will do the will of God, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.*

LUKE xviii. 15, 16.

AND THEY BROUGHT UNTO HIM ALSO INFANTS, THAT HE WOULD TOUCH THEM: BUT WHEN HIS DISCIPLES SAW IT, THEY REBUKED THEM. BUT JESUS CALLED THEM UNTO HIM, AND SAID, SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT: FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

REASON leads us to expect, and revelation to believe, the immortality of the ſoul, and that every human being is an heir of eternity. This ſtamps an inconceivable value on man. Millions of ſilver and gold, crowns and kingdoms, and all the riches of the material creation, are nothing in the balance againſt a ſoul immortal. The moment a rational immortal ſpirit animates a human body, though it be yet in embryo, a ſpark is kindled that will never be extinguiſhed. Yonder ſun in the firmament will, one day, ſicken and languiſh, and all his fires become extinct: The ſtars which gild the celeſtial arch, ſhall fall from their orbits and be loſt in darkneſs: The heavens themſelves ſhall wax old and paſs away. But this intellectual ſpark, kindled up in the moral world by the breath of the Almighty, ſhall burn on with undiminiſhed, probably, with ever-increaſing luſtre through an endleſs duration.

The birth of an infant is ſo common and ordinary an event, that we hardly deem it worthy of notice; and in the eye of ſenſe, the little helpleſs ſtranger makes but a diminutive appearance. But if we view it in the light which immortality throws upon it, if we conſider it as emerging from eternal night into life without end, an heir of worlds unknown, deſtined to ſurvive the funeral of material nature, and either to riſe from glory to glory, by endleſs gradations aſcending the ſcale of perfection; or to ſink from gulf to gulf in the bottomleſs abyſs of miſery, according to the manner in which it ſhall acquit itſelf during its paſſage through this probationary ſtate; conſidered in this light, how amazingly important is its birth, its entrance on this unceaſing exiſtence! What muſt the thoughtful parent feel, while he contemplates his new born child as thus beginning its career for a happy or miſerable eternity! Aware of the numberleſs ſnares and temptations attending its pilgrimage in this ſtrange country, previous to its return to the great Father of Spirits, and conſcious of his own inſufficiency ſucceſsfully to guide, or effectually to guard it, even from temporal, and much leſs from ſpiritual dangers, what ſolicitude muſt he feel to devolve the ultimate and principal charge of it upon One mighty to ſave; and, if poſſible, engage for it the protection and bleſſing of Him, who is able to keep it unto life eternal! How wiſe and rational in itſelf, as well as conſonant to the feelings of pa-

rental affection, was the conduct of those parents who, in the days of his flesh, thus brought their little children to the great Saviour of the world, imploring for them his favour and blessing?

Ages before the coming of the Messiah, he was predicted under the character of a Shepherd; a Shepherd so tender and compassionate, that he would not only take care of his flock in general, but pay a special attention to those whose circumstances were peculiar, gathering up the feeble lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom. The narration in our text sets before us the pleasing accomplishment of this ancient prophecy. The great and good Shepherd of the sheep was now in a part of the country where many of his chosen flock resided. So great was their veneration for him, that they not only brought their sick to him for healing, but their babes for his blessing. As these little ones were as yet incapable of being instructed by Christ, his disciples opposed their being presented to him, from an apprehension, perhaps, that they might be troublesome to their master. But though infants could receive no present instruction, they were capable of his blessing, and were as much the objects of his redemption as their parents, or as the disciples themselves. For this reason, our Lord was indignant, *much displeased*, says the evangelist Mark, at this conduct of his disciples, and *rebuked them*. He frequently corrected their mistakes, but seldom with

more pointed disapprobation, than when they would have kept little children from him, or discouraged their dedication to him. *Suffer them to come*, says he, *and forbid them not;* and then goes on to assign a reason why he would have them thus come or brought to him, a reason which ought to silence every objection, and forever prevent any future exception against them, *for of such is the kingdom of God.*

In these words, we behold the great Head of the church numbering little children among the subjects of his kingdom; we hear him declaring their title to all the privileges of his church, either in its state of grace on earth, or in its state of glory in heaven. If the latter should be understood by *the kingdom of God*, still it presupposes an interest in the former. The extent of this grant is also worthy of our grateful notice. It is not limited to the few children then present, but extended to all like them, in every age and nation; of *such* is the kingdom of God. In John iii. 5. we are most solemnly assured that not one of our lapsed race can be the subject of this kingdom, unless he be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and water; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man* (in the Greek, *any one*) *be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* The certain inference then is, that in pronouncing infants the subjects of his kingdom, our Lord has pronounced them the subjects of the regenerating influence of his

ſpirit, and of the waſhing of water in baptiſm as the outward ſign of ſuch an inward influence. When he ſaid, concerning little children, *of ſuch is the kingdom of God*, he implicitly declared his will that they ſhould be baptized. Authorized by this, and innumerable other paſſages of ſcripture, in which their ſeed are repreſented as included in the covenant made with themſelves, chriſtian parents have the unſpeakable ſatisfaction of looking upon their infant offſpring as born the ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, and as ſuch they bring them to baptiſm, the ordinance by which Chriſt requires his ſubjects to be diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the world. To the feelings of pious parents, how conſoling, how tranſportingly joyful is the opening of this proſpect in favour of their offſpring! Next to the hope of their own ſalvation, nothing can be to them the ground of more abundant thankfulneſs to God, of more overflowing gratitude to the Redeemer. Is there, however, a ſect of our fellow chriſtians who take the place of the erring diſciples on this occaſion, and, with airs and looks of diſapprobation, attempt to hinder the dedication of our little ones to that Saviour who ſo kindly invites them to him, and ſo graciouſly calls them *his* ſubjects? Would they diſſuade us from applying the ſeal of the covenant to thoſe whom the great Mediator of the covenant has thus explicitly included in it? When, in obedience to the command of the great Shepherd, we are ſetting his

mark upon his ſheep, do they pretend, in oppoſition to his own declaration, that lambs are no part of his flock ?

Controverſy, my friends, is irkſome and undeſirable, yet it is agreeable to the feelings of a generous mind, to plead the cauſe of thoſe who are unable to ſpeak for themſelves. In the preſent queſtion, I offer myſelf an advocate for little children, vindicating the title ſo graciouſly vouchſafed them in the text. I am indeed aware, that any arguments, however forcible in themſelves, which touch the prejudices of ignorance and ſuperſtition, inſtead of curing them, have frequently an oppoſite effect, rendering them more inveterate and incurable ; I would yet hope better things on this occaſion, for more candour, liberality, and good ſenſe in my preſent auditors ; that they will hold themſelves open to conviction, and ready to receive the truth in proportion as its evidence ſhall be duly exhibited. When I ſet before you any hiſtorical facts, you will do me the juſtice to believe that I ſtate them with fairneſs and impartiality ; and when I refer you to *the law and the testimony*, you will, like the noble Bereans, *search the scriptures* to ſatisfy yourſelves with reſpect to their true meaning.

My hearers,—We ourſelves, in general, were baptized in our infancy ; ſo were our parents, grand parents, and anceſtors back for generations immemorial. This is the general practice of our

country. In theſe United States, there are probably more than ſix millions of people, wearing the chriſtian name. Of theſe, ſcarcely an hundredth part is of the Baptiſt perſuaſion ; yet this is, I believe, a greater proportion than is to be found in any other country of Chriſtendom. The Epiſcopalians, and great majority of Diſſenters in England and Ireland, the Preſbyterians of Scotland, the Greek churches in the Eaſtern hemiſphere, as well as the Romaniſts of the Weſt, together with the Lutherans, Calviniſts and Proteſtants in general throughout Germany, France, the Low Countries, and the north of Europe,—are now, and have been for ages paſt, in the practice of infant baptiſm. Upon this ſubject, the Baptiſts and perhaps the Quakers excepted, there is but one ſentiment among all the other numerous ſects and denominations which compoſe the chriſtian world. All theſe denominations, however, are pronounced unbaptized, and virtually excommunicated by the little modern ſect of Baptiſts. Infant Baptiſm is denounced a deviation from the footſteps of Chriſt's flock ſo groſs, a corruption of his ordinance ſo eſſential, as renders it an abſolute nullity. Of courſe, our pious forefathers, the firſt ſettlers of New England, whom we have been accuſtomed to eſteem and venerate as poſſeſſing more of the ſpirit and cuſtoms of primitive chriſtianity than any other deſcription of people ſince the apoſtolic age, abſolutely failed of an entrance into Chriſt's church,

lived and died without the seal of God's covenant, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and destitute of all fellowship with the household of faith.

My brethren, do not our minds revolt from such ideas? Does not our reason lead us to query whether they, who bring so heavy a charge against, not only their fellow christians now living, but against the former generations of God's people, may not themselves be the innovators, if not the corrupters of Christ's ordinance; in short, whether the mistake may not be wholly on *their* side? Are the Baptist teachers so eminent for their erudition, the extent of their knowledge, the soundness of their judgment, and the uprightness of their views, as to be above the suspicion of error? Ought we, without inquiry or examination, to exchange the religious observances of our pious forefathers for the practices which these new teachers are so earnest to introduce? Does it become the steadfastness of sober enlightened christians to be so hasty in changing their religion? Since we are told with so confident an air, that infant baptism is a gross corruption of Christ's ordinance, have we not a right to demand of them, when, and by whom, this corruption was introduced? We are able to trace back *their* opinions upon the subject to the very period when those opinions were first divulged. History sets before us the first authors of those opinions, gives us their names and their characters. We know, with certainty,

where, when, and by whom their ſect was founded. But when we look back and ſearch the records of church hiſtory for the origin of infant baptiſm, we go up century after century without finding the leaſt hint of its firſt introduction until we arrive to the very age of the apoſtles. Are we not then conſtrained to believe that it is coeval with chriſtianity itſelf?

We acknowledge, indeed, that during the ages of darkneſs which preceded the Proteſtant reformation, the inſtitutions, as well as the doctrines of Chriſt, were exceedingly corrupted by the mixture of human inventions. We learn from hiſtory the origin of theſe corruptions, and that, in each ſucceſſive age, there were witneſſes againſt them, whoſe teſtimony ſhows that they never were, even at the ſeaſon of the thickeſt darkneſs, univerſally received. I ſhall now prove that infant baptiſm ſtands not on the foot of theſe corruptions; was not introduced with them; and during the courſe of many revolving ages, was not ſo much as once ſcrupled by a ſingle chriſtian. Of the writings of the primitive fathers, the immediate ſucceſſors of the apoſtles, ſome ſcattered fragments only have reached modern times; yet, in theſe fragments, we have unqueſtionable evidence that infant baptiſm was the general practice in the very century after the apoſtles. They had been dead about forty years, when *Juſtin Martyr* publiſhed his apology, in which he mentions ſome "aged chriſt-

ians who were made disciples in or from their infancy." This is understood as implying that they were baptized, as that was the known method of making visible disciples. *Irenæus*, who was born before the death of St. John, is yet more full in his testimony. *Origen* was born about one hundred years after the decease of the apostles, and from him we have these words, "The church received a tradition or order from the apostles to administer baptism to infants." About fifty years after this, or one hundred and fifty from the apostles, baptism being then universally considered as supplying the place of circumcision, a question arose, whether it ought not, as circumcision was, to be deferred till the eighth day after the birth of the child. For the discussion of this question, a council of sixty-six bishops, or pastors of churches, was assembled at *Carthage*. In their result, they give it as their opinion, that "baptism ought least of all to be refused to a new born infant;" and as to its being put off to the eighth day, they add, "there is not one that approves of it: it appears to us all, who are here met in council, far otherwise." Undoubtedly some of the elders upon this council could remember what the practice of the church had been for seventy or eighty years before, at which period there were probably many living who were born within the age of the apostles, and who must have known what their practice had been. If the baptizing of infants had not originat-

ed with the apoſtles, is it credible that all the churches of Chriſtendom ſhould have ſo ſoon and ſo univerſally departed from the apoſtolic inſtitution? If ſo ſtriking and notorious an innovation had been attempted, is it not beyond all belief, that it ſhould have been every where received without a ſingle objection from any of thoſe myriads of ſaints, confeſſors and martyrs, who lived in the pureſt and beſt ages of the church?

After this period, as we come down to the third and fourth centuries, the writings of *Austin*, *John Chrysostom*, *Pelagius*, and a multitude of others, ſhow that, in thoſe centuries, there was not a ſingle exception to the baptiſm of infants. The learned Dr. *Wall*, who inquired moſt accurately into this ſubject, ſays, "For the firſt four hundred years, there appears only one man, *Tertullian*, that adviſed the *delay* of infant baptiſm, in ſome caſes, and one *Gregory*, that did, perhaps, practiſe ſuch delay, in the caſe of his own children; but no ſociety ſo thinking, or ſo practiſing; nor any one man ſaying that it was unlawful to baptize infants. In the next ſeven hundred years, there is not ſo much as one man to be found, that either *ſpoke for*, or practiſed any ſuch *delay*, but all the contrary. And when, about the year 1130, one ſect among the Waldenſes declared againſt the baptizing of infants, as being incapable of ſalvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinion; and they of them that held that opinion, quickly dwin-

dled away and diſappeared, there being no more heard of, who held that tenet, until the riſing of the German Antipedobaptiſts, in the year 1522." This account by Dr. *Wall* brings us down to the era of the Proteſtant reformation. Amidſt the commotions attendant upon that great revolution, ſprang up the founders of the preſent ſect of Anabaptiſts. "Soon after *Luther*'s appearance," ſays Dr. Robertſon in his hiſtory of Charles V. "the raſhneſs or ignorance of ſome of his diſciples led them to publiſh tenets no leſs abſurd than pernicious, which being propoſed to men extremely illiterate, but fond of novelty, and at a time when their minds were turned wholly towards religious ſpeculations, gained too eaſy credit and authority among them.—The moſt remarkable of their religious tenets related to the ſacrament of baptiſm, which, as they contended, ought to be adminiſtered only to perſons grown up to years of underſtanding, and ſhould be performed, not by ſprinkling them with water, but by dipping them in it. For this reaſon they condemned the baptiſm of infants, and rebaptizing all whom they admitted into their ſociety, the ſect came to be diſtinguiſhed by the name of Anabaptiſts.—To this peculiar notion concerning baptiſm, they added other principles of a moſt enthuſiaſtic as well as dangerous nature. By a monſtrous and almoſt incredible conjunction, voluptuouſneſs was ingrafted on religion, and diſſolute riot accompanied the auſteri-

ties of fanatical devotion.—Luther, who had teſtified againſt this fanatical ſpirit on its firſt appearance, now deeply lamented its progreſs, and expoſed the deluſion with great ſtrength of argument, as well as acrimony of ſtyle." Not *Luther* only, but *Calvin*, *Melancthon*, *Bullinger*, *Zuinglius*, *Gualter*, *Sleidan*, *Zanchy*, and indeed all the eminent reformers, united their voice in bearing ſolemn teſtimony againſt the principles of this ſect, reprobating them in terms of great ſeverity.

Perhaps theſe great and good men would have uſed leſs aſperity of language in ſpeaking of them, had they been chargeable with no other errors beſides thoſe relating to baptiſm; but, in that age, they did not content themſelves with diſturbing the peace of religious ſocieties, and breaking up of churches: they committed outrages upon civil ſociety, which united all the ſtates of Germany againſt them. They were ſubdued and diſperſed by military force. But, as generally happens in this mode of ſuppreſſing any ſect or party, the fugitives were the more confirmed in the belief of their principal peculiarities, and ſpread their tenets in every country whither they fled for ſhelter. Dropping the extravagances which had armed the civil magiſtrate againſt them, they rigidly adhered to many of their other notions. "The party," ſays Dr. Robertſon, "ſtill ſubſiſts in the *Low Countries*, and a ſmall number of this ſect is ſettled in England." Having found their way into England, ſome of them very

early appeared in America, formed a ſociety at *Swanzy*, and another at Boſton, in the year 1665. Of this laſt, Dr. Mather relates, "that they admitted into their ſociety perſons whom our churches had excommunicated for moral ſcandal, and employed them as adminiſtrators of the two ſacraments."—From ſuch an origin and ſuch beginnings has this ſect ariſen. If there be any truth in hiſtory, their opinions are wholly modern and unknown to antiquity. If infant baptiſm be an human invention and an abſolute nullity, as they pretend, it is certain that, three centuries ago, there was not a ſociety of baptized chriſtians in the world, nor had been for many preceding ages. What then are we to conclude? Did the church of Chriſt remain, during the lapſe of centuries, overpowered by *the gates of hell?* If we could ſuppoſe this; yet, would it not be more difficult ſtill to ſuppoſe, that it was, at length, recovered by the *madmen* of *Munster*, the German Anabaptiſts?

Though the ſcriptures be, at laſt, our only ſure guide; yet it is a ſatisfaction to know in what ſenſe our fellow chriſtians underſtand the ſcriptures with reference to any diſputed point, and how they have been underſtood by the church of Chriſt in former ages; and if we be able, as in this queſtion concerning infant baptiſm, to trace the practice of it up through all preceding ages to that of the apoſtles, it muſt be allowed a ſtrong preſumptive argument in favour of its having originated with the

apoſtles themſelves. It is, in this way, that we argue the change of the ſabbath from the laſt to the firſt day of the week. The New Teſtament contains no expreſs order or command upon the ſubject; but as we can trace the obſervance of the firſt day of the week up to the age of the apoſtles, and find that *they* actually met on that day for religious worſhip, we conclude that the practice originated from their authority and appointment. In my view, the argument is equally full and ſtrong in favour of infant baptiſm.

But I ſhall now go on to ſet before you the ſcripture authority for this practice. An illuſtration of all the numerous paſſages of ſcripture countenancing it, cannot be expected in a ſingle diſcourſe. I propoſe but a brief ſketch of the principal arguments. As there is abſolutely no text or ſentence in the whole Bible forbidding it, if we can find any degree of evidence in its favour, if, from the reaſonableneſs of the thing and the general tenour of ſcripture, we have room to believe that it will not be diſpleaſing to God for pious parents, in dedicating themſelves to him, to give up their offſpring alſo in an ordinance which ſeals and marks them as the ſubjects of the Redeemer's kingdom, no religious parent ought to delay the ſeeking of this privilege for his children.

If we conſider what the law of nature and nations teaches concerning a ſtate of infancy, it may afford a probable preſumption that, if the parents ſuſtain

a viſible relation to the church and people of God, their infant offspring are alſo to be viewed as belonging to the ſame ſociety. It was never made a queſtion among any civilized people, whether parents had a right to covenant for their children, as well as for themſelves. By virtue of ſuch engagements, children in all countries, as they arrive to years of diſcretion, not only inherit the poſſeſſions of their parents, but enjoy many privileges. They are conſidered as parts of the community, and are treated as ſuch. No ſovereign prince would think the honour of his kingdom conſulted by thoſe who ſhould go about to deny the children born within his realm to be his ſubjects. As theſe form a large proportion of the ſubjects of every government, it would be accounted the height of abſurdity for any to pretend that, till they have themſelves ſworn allegiance, they neither owe obedience to the government, nor are entitled to its protection. By the Moſaic law, it was provided that, if a ſervant married and had children, all the children born in his maſter's houſe were to be conſidered as the property of the maſter, ſubject to his authority, and entitled to his ſupport and protection. Is it not equally reaſonably that the children of Chriſt's ſervants ſhould be conſidered as belonging to him; that they who are born in his houſe, ſhould be acknowledged as members of his family? David ſeems to have viewed it in this light when, in manifeſt alluſion to the law now

mentioned, he says, *O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid*, i. e. born in thy house.

It is granted on all hands, that the covenant of works made with the first Adam, included his offspring. We all feel the fatal consequences of his breach of that covenant. *By the offence of one, judgment is come upon all men to condemnation*, and the whole race cut off from justification and life by the deeds of the law, or on the condition of the covenant of works. The hopes of all mankind now rest on the second Adam, on the covenant of grace in the hands of the Mediator. The scriptures lead us to view him as the channel through which the whole current of divine mercy, in temporal as well as spiritual blessings, is conveyed to an apostate world. From the beginning, faith in him has been the condition of our reconciliation to God through him. Adam, after his fall, with all the patriarchs, and the whole Old Testament church, founded their hopes on the promised *seed of the woman*, and believed in a Saviour to come, in the same manner as christians now believe in him as already come. The faith of the former regarded its object as future; that of the latter as already manifested. With this circumstantial difference, the principle is the same in both. But infants, at all times, are equally incapable of the exercise of faith. With this condition of the covenant of grace, required of adults, their new born

offspring cannot comply. Yet they ſtand in equal need of the bleſſings and privileges of this covenant. By one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin; and ſo death paſſes upon all men, even upon thoſe who have not ſinned after the ſimilitude of Adam's tranſgreſſion. Little infants are no ſooner born, than they become liable to the penal conſequences of Adam's ſin, and ſuffer, as his deſcendants, not only many infirmities and miſeries while they live; but multitudes of them ſink into the darkneſs of the grave almoſt as ſoon as they receive the light of life. It has been computed that a third part, if not half, of the human race die in infancy. Are they loſt in perdition, or ſwept back into nonentity? Is it not more conſonant to ſcripture, as well as to reaſon, to believe, that if, without their perſonal conſent, they were ſo included in the covenant of works as to be ſubjected to the manifold evils conſequent upon its breach, their own perſonal conſent (which it is equally impoſſible for them to give) ſhould not be neceſſary in order to their being entitled to the privileges and bleſſings of the covenant of grace? Is not this hope, concerning them, encouraged by the favourable terms in which they are frequently mentioned in ſcripture? For their ſakes, God ſometimes averts or delays the threatened ruin of whole communities. *Should not I ſpare Nineveh that great city, wherein are more than ſix ſcore*

thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?

But though the children of heathen parents should be considered as left to the uncovenanted mercy of God; yet surely there is some special room for hope concerning those of his covenant and professing people. The pious parent, in entering into covenant with God, and giving up himself, does, at the same time, dedicate to Him and his service whatever he can call his own, making over all his rights and interests to God, and submitting the whole to his disposal. His children, above all his other possessions, are the objects of his greatest affection and concern. These therefore are, in special, devoted to God with fervent supplications that they may be his, wholly and forever; and, if they be so included in the covenant made with their parent as to receive the promise of God's *blessing* and *spirit*; if they have been redeemed by Christ, ought they not to be baptized in token of that redemption?

Jewish parents were allowed to make vows in the name of their children, which vows those children, as they came of age, were bound to perform. By virtue of the paternal authority, and on the supposed right of the parent to covenant for his child in all things pertaining to the child's interest and happiness, it was lawful for parents to dedicate their children to the immediate and special service of God. Thus the mother of the prophet

Samuel vowed him to the Lord before he was born, and, from his birth, dedicated him to the ſervice of the tabernacle under the high prieſt; and it ſeems that God approved of the vow, and accepted the gift. Have not chriſtian parents the ſame right to diſpoſe of their children? May not they, by the ſame paternal authority, and, for the ſame reaſon, in baptiſm dedicate their children to be the ſervants of Chriſt? When we thus preſent our little ones to the gracious Redeemer, can there be any other queſtion but this, whether he will accept them? I congratulate you, Chriſtians, on the aſſurance which we have received, that when he was here on earth, a fair experiment of the caſe was tried, and our text contains his deciſion.

By thus deciding, however, he did but confirm privileges which had been always enjoyed by the children of his profeſſing people. Conſult your Bibles, and you will find the ſignal deliverances wrought in favour of God's ſervants, his promiſes to them and covenant tranſactions with them, bearing, in almoſt every inſtance, a reſpect unto their offspring. To *Noah* he ſaid, Geneſis vii. 1. *Come thou, and all thy houſe, into the ark: for thee have I ſeen righteous before me in this generation.* On account of *his* righteouſneſs, his whole family were allowed to ſhare with him in the privileges of the ark. Again, God ſays, chap. ix. 9. "And I, behold I eſtabliſh my covenant with you, and with your *ſeed* after you." In the reſcue of

righteous Lot from the overthrow of Sodom, for *his* ſake, we find the offer of the ſame deliverance extended to his whole family, and even to the young men who were but forming an alliance with his daughters. So the faith of Rahab the harlot availed, not only to her own preſervation, but to that of all her relations. If it ſhould be ſaid, that theſe were temporal deliverances and bleſſings only, ſtill it muſt be acknowledged that they were vouchſafed through Chriſt in conſequence of the covenant of redemption, and were typical of ſpiritual and eternal bleſſings.

The new covenant was virtually propoſed to our firſt parents when they received the firſt promiſe of a Saviour, and their family was thereby conſtituted the viſible church and people of God. It continued in the families of ſuch of their deſcendants as adhered to the knowledge and worſhip of the true God. As we have no account of public aſſemblies during the patriarchal age, the ordinances of God, and the forms of ſocial worſhip ſeem to have been kept up and celebrated in ſeparate and diſtinct families only. A foundation however for a national church was early laid, in the call and ſeparation of Abraham and his poſterity from the reſt of the world, to be the peculiar people of God. All the bleſſings of the goſpel were compriſed in the promiſe made to him on that occaſion. This promiſe, together with the ſeal of God's covenant, was expreſsly extended to his poſterity through

their ſucceſſive generations. In this language did the Almighty addreſs his faithful ſervant, Gen. xvii. *I will eſtabliſh my covenant with thee, and thy ſeed after thee, in their generations——to be a God unto thee, and to thy ſeed after thee.—This is my covenant which ye ſhall keep between me and you, and thy ſeed after thee; every man child among you ſhall be circumciſed——and it ſhall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* That the covenant here mentioned was the ſame covenant of grace which is made with believers under the goſpel, can, with no ſhew of reaſon, be doubted. The promiſe, *I will be a God to thee and to thy ſeed*, includes bleſſings of every kind. Accordingly the prophets in predicting the outpouring of the Spirit, the forgiveneſs of ſins, and a new heart, repreſent God, in the beſtowment of theſe bleſſings, as fulfilling this his covenant with Abraham, *performing the truth unto Jacob, and the mercy which he ſwore to the fathers of old.* To the ſame promiſe, the writers of the New Teſtament frequently refer while illuſtrating the bleſſings of the goſpel. It is alſo obſervable that the token of the covenant here enjoined upon Abraham and his ſeed, is expreſsly called *the ſeal of the righteouſness of faith.* From this, it appears that faith was really the condition of the Abrahamic, as it is of the goſpel covenant, and was as truly denoted by circumciſion of old, as it is by baptiſm now. Thus we ſee that, in this early conſtitution of God's church, infants

were, by his authority, made members, included in the covenant with their parents, and received the ſeal of the covenant in circumciſion. In this ordinance did Abraham and his numerous deſcendants, through their ſucceſſive generations, give up their infant offspring to God and initiate them into his viſible church. At a moſt ſolemn renewal of this covenant, deſcribed Deut. xxix. Moſes ſays to the aſſembled tribes of Iſrael, "Ye ſtand this day all of you before the Lord your God—all the men of Iſrael, your wives, your *little ones*—that thou ſhouldeſt enter into a covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath—that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath ſaid unto thee, and as he hath ſworn unto thy fathers." Expreſs reference is here had to the covenant with Abraham; the very language of that covenant is adopted, and if it does not comprehend whatever is eſſential in the covenant of grace, it is hard to conceive in what terms that covenant ſhould be expreſſed. What can we deſire or imagine more on the part of the Almighty, than for him to *be a God unto his people;* and on their part, what can they promiſe more, than is implied in an oath of allegiance and fidelity to him? Such was the tranſaction at this time between him and them, and in this tranſaction, little children are expreſsly mentioned as bearing their part. In oppoſition to ſuch abundant evidence, is it not ſtrange that any, who profeſs a reverence for the ſcriptures, ſhould affect to rep-

reſent infants as incapable of church membership, of ſuſtaining a covenant relation to God, and of receiving the ſeal of his covenant ?

Knowing that the divine promiſes were not limited to themſelves, but extended to their offspring, the pious patriarchs not only committed their children to God by faith and prayer, but, putting their hands upon them, ſolemnly bleſſed them in the name of the Lord. Being thus included in the covenant made with their parents, the children of his profeſſing people are expreſsly claimed by God as his *own*, in a peculiar ſenſe ; and when the Iſraelites, in their apoſtacy, led their children to the altar of idols, they are charged with the guilt of alienating the Lord's propriety. "Thou haſt taken thy ſons and thy daughters, whom thou haſt borne unto *me*, and theſe haſt thou ſacrificed unto them to be devoured——thou haſt ſlain *my* children." Ezekiel xvi. This language is not uſed with reference to the offspring of heathen parents. From them the ſeed of Iſrael are alſo diſtinguiſhed by manifold promiſes. It is ſaid, *all thy children ſhall be taught of God—The Lord ſhall circumcise their heart—They ſhall ſpring up as among the graſs, as willows by the water courſes. One ſhall ſay, I am the Lord's*, &c. In the writings of the prophets, numerous paſſages occur which foretel a variety of bleſſings and privileges in ſtore for the children of God's people. On theſe principles, the pſalmiſt calls children *an heritage*

of the Lord, and ſpeaks of them as given for the increaſe and repleniſhing of the church, as well as for the comfort of their parents. The ſeed of the righteous are pronounced *blessed*, are called *God's servants*, as well as *his* children; and are required by Joel, to appear in Zion before him, *even the children that suck the breast.* A child at the breaſt is repreſented as *hoping in God*, and as *cast upon him from the womb.* To *one*, God ſays, *before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee*; concerning *another*, an angel from heaven teſtified, that *he should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb.*

It is certain that, from the beginning of thoſe diſpenſations towards mankind which are carried on through a mediator down to the coming of the Meſſiah, children were uniformly conſidered and treated as members of God's church, by his authority conſtituted ſuch, included in the covenant with their parents, and received the ſeal of that covenant, *the seal of the righteousness of faith.* Our Baptiſt brethren have turned them out of God's church, and out of his covenant, and declared that no ſeal of the covenant ſhall be given them any longer. Ought they not to ſhow by what authority they do this, and who gave them this authority? They are accuſtomed to demand of us an explicit warrant for our conduct; but where do they find any ſhadow of a warrant for turning out of God's church thoſe brought in by his command? Had any thing in the doctrine or conduct of the apoſtles,

at the firſt publication of the goſpel, been underſtood as excluding children from being numbered among the ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, from memberſhip in his church, and from the ſeal of it in baptiſm, is it not utterly incredible that ſo great an alteration, with reſpect to the conſtituent members of the church, ſhould not have been explicitly recorded? Had the friends of chriſtianity been ſilent, its enemies, moſt ſurely, would have proclaimed it throughout the earth. How eagerly would the great body of the Jewiſh nation have lain hold on ſuch an handle, to excuſe their rejection of the goſpel. Thoſe of them, who received it, were extremely reluctant to part with circumciſion, even after they knew baptiſm to be ſubſtituted in its place; and had not this latter rite been applied to their children, as well as to themſelves, they would have been ſtill more tenacious of the former. Nay, we can hardly ſuppoſe that any conſiderations would have induced them to drop it. The probability is, that they would ſooner have joined the general oppoſition againſt the goſpel. The idea of ſeeing their children ſtript of privileges which they had hitherto always enjoyed, would have been ſo univerſally offenſive to the Jews, that perhaps ſcarcely an individual of that nation would have embraced chriſtianity. Their unbelieving prieſts and rulers would not have failed to take the advantage of ſo plauſible and popular an objection againſt the goſpel. They knew the tenour of the

Abrahamic covenant, and gloried in the privileges derived from it to themſelves and to their children. If any thing in the doctrine of the apoſtles could have been conſtrued as a diminution of thoſe privileges; if it could have been objected that, by embracing chriſtianity, their infant offspring would be obviouſly in a worſe condition than they were under the law, would even loſe the ſeal of God's covenant and be caſt out of his church; they ſurely would have made this the ſubject of general and vehement clamour againſt the goſpel. Nor could the apoſtles have hoped for ſucceſs in preaching it to the Jews, unleſs they firſt removed ſo great and dangerous a ſtumbling block. But neither in their ſpeeches nor writings, nor in any ancient author, do we find the moſt diſtant hint of any ſuch objection, either as advanced by the enemies, or as obviated by the friends of the goſpel. We conclude, therefore, that no room for ſuch an objection was ever given by the apoſtles. On the contrary, their writings abound with paſſages which cannot be underſtood but on the principle of infants being included in the covenant made with their parents, and thereby entitled to the ſeal of it in baptiſm.

The covenant made with believers under the goſpel is, in Romans iv. and Galatians iii. repreſented as eſſentially the ſame with that of Abraham of old. On this ground the bleſſing of Abraham is ſaid to come upon the Gentiles through Jeſus Chriſt; and chriſtians are called the children of

Abraham, and heirs with him, to the ſame promiſe or covenant which, the apoſtle ſays, *God confirmed in Chriſt*, and which could not be diſannulled or vacated by the law four hundred and thirty years after. The ceremonial and typical inſtitutions of this law were given to aſſiſt the faith of God's people in looking forward to the coming of *the promiſed ſeed* in whom they would have their accompliſhment, and, of courſe, be aboliſhed. Through the duration of theſe ritual inſtitutions, the covenant with Abraham continued, and after their abolition, remained the ſame that it was before. It deſcended with all its privileges to the chriſtian church. *If ye are Chriſt's*, ſays the apoſtle, *then are ye Abraham's ſeed, and heirs according to the promiſe*. As the promiſe was to him and his ſeed, ſo it is now to chriſtians and their offſpring. This is aſſerted by St. Peter, Acts ii. 38, 39. where he thus exhorts his awakened hearers, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jeſus Chriſt for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt; for *the promiſe is unto you and your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call." That the covenant with Abraham is here meant by *the promiſe*, will appear highly probable if we conſider how frequently this covenant is, by way of eminence, ſo ſtyled; but what ſets Peter's meaning beyond a doubt, is his own explanation of it, in Acts iii. 25. where, addreſſing the ſame

hearers on the ſame ſubject, he urges this argument, *Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham*, &c. His reminding them here of their being the children of Abraham's covenant, is of the ſame purport with what he had before ſaid of the *promise being to them and their children.* Taking the promiſe then as referring to the covenant with Abraham, let us attend to Peter's argument in this exhortation, *repent and be baptized; for the promise is unto you and your children.* The promiſe in the covenant with Abraham being unto them, is here urged as a reaſon why they ſhould be baptized; but as the ſame promiſe is extended to their children, it is a reaſon equally good for the baptiſm of their children. As Jews, the preſent auditors, with their families, had hitherto been members of the church of God as it had ſubſiſted under the diſpenſation of Moſes; but as it was for the future to ſubſiſt under that of Chriſt, they, with their children, are exhorted to be baptized into the name of Chriſt in token of their relation to the church under its preſent new form. To them, as the natural ſeed of Abraham, theſe goſpel privileges were firſt tendered; but as the offer of them would ſoon be extended to thoſe as yet *afar off*, and the bleſſing of Abraham would come upon the Gentiles, to the latter when thus called, the ſame promiſe would apply, furniſhing a

reaſon for the baptiſm of believing Gentiles and their offspring. To every man, whether Jew or Gentile, on his exerciſing the faith of Abraham, this promiſe is ſure, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.* Of courſe, the ſeal or token of the divine promiſe, whether it be circumciſion, as under the law; or baptiſm, as under the goſpel, belongs as really to the infant offspring of the believing parent as to the parent himſelf.

This conſtitution of the covenant of grace under the goſpel, is confirmed by the ſtrain of reaſoning in Romans xi. There the church is repreſented under the figure of a good olive tree, and the Jews as its natural branches. When ſome of theſe branches were broken off for their unbelief, the Gentile converts, by nature a wild and foreign growth, are ſpoken of as graffed in among the remaining believing Jews, and with them *partaking of the root and fatness of the olive tree*—enjoying the privileges of God's ancient covenant with Abraham, who is here repreſented as the *root* or patriarch of the church, and all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, as his children or branches from him. And *if the root be holy*, ſays the apoſtle, *so are the branches.* In conſequence of their connection with it, the branches are conſidered as ſharing in the holineſs of the root. If this were true with reſpect to the Jews, the natural children of Abraham, it muſt be equally true with reſpect to his adopted children. The latter being graffed

into the ſame ſtock, partake of *its root and fatness*, of every privilege indulged to the natural ſeed of old; and as the covenant with them included their offſpring, ſo are the children of chriſtian parents included in the covenant with them. If they, as the root, be holy, ſo are their children as branches from ſuch a root.

An exemplification of this truth occurs in 1 Cor. vii. 14. where the apoſtle decides on the caſe of thoſe children but one of whoſe parents is a believer: He determines that the federal holineſs of the believing wife or huſband, deſcends to their common iſſue, and that ſuch children are to be reckoned, not as *unclean*, but *holy*, not common as the heathen, but *Saints* on account of their covenant relation to God and memberſhip in his church. The word *holy*, in this text, is elſewhere generally tranſlated *Saints*, the common appellation by which the members of Chriſt's church are diſtinguiſhed throughout the New Teſtament. As the children of believers have the appellation of *Saints* from St. Paul, ſo they have that of *diſciples* from St. Peter in Acts xv. 10. *why tempt ye God, to put a yoke on the neck of the diſciples?* The yoke here principally intended was circumciſion, which the Judaizing chriſtians attempted to impoſe on the children of the believing Gentiles. By calling theſe children *diſciples*, Peter recognizes their relation to Chriſt. *Saints* or *diſciples* always denote perſons belonging to the church, and entitled

to its diſtinguiſhing rites and privileges. It would be eaſy to multiply quotations from the ſpeeches and writings of the apoſtles, in which they appear uniformly to conſider the offspring of believers as included in the profeſſion of their parents, and with them numbered among the peculiar people of God.

But had the apoſtles been ſilent upon the ſubject, the declaration of our Saviour in the text, with the circumſtances attending it, is, in my view, deciſive. After he has, with his own gracious lips, ſo expreſsly encouraged their dedication to him; in ſo pointed a manner teſtified his diſpleaſure at an attempt to keep them from him, and in terms ſo explicit declared, *of such is the kingdom of heaven;* there can be no room to doubt of his acceptance when, in holy baptiſm, we preſent our tender babes as the lambs of his flock, to this great Shepherd of the ſheep. Do our Baptiſt brethren tell us, that all our Lord meant on this occaſion was, that his kingdom conſiſts of adult perſons, who, in meekneſs and humility, are like children? Why then, we aſk, may not his kingdom conſiſt of children themſelves, whom theſe adult perſons are thus required to be like? But if he had aimed at nothing more than teaching a leſſon of humility, there could have been no reaſon for his diſpleaſure againſt the diſciples for keeping little children from him. Lambs and doves might have anſwered his purpoſe juſt as well; and theſe, as often as infants, are mentioned in ſcripture as emblems of the

innocence, meekneſs and humility which ought to adorn the lives of chriſtians. But would Chriſt have taken lambs and doves *into his arms, laid his hands upon them, blessed them*, and ſaid, *of such is the kingdom of heaven?*

It ſeems, by his manner of receiving theſe infants, as if he meant to ſatisfy his followers through every age, that they are to be conſidered as his ſubjects, and the heirs of his grace. Towards whom did he ever give more expreſſive tokens of his favour? The *blessing* was always accounted a ſacred thing in the church. *The laying on of hands* was uſed in the conſecration of miniſters, and alſo for the communication of the Holy Spirit. It was indeed one of the very laſt tokens of acknowledgment which the diſciples received from their Maſter, at the moment of his parting from them, and aſcenſion into heaven. Yet, with each of theſe ſolemn forms did he own little children as his, and conſecrate them to himſelf—at the ſame time adding, as a further rebuke upon the diſciples for ſeeming to think them incapable of the bleſſings of his kingdom, *Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein:* As if he had ſaid, "you ſeem to ſtand upon diſtinctions, and to think of qualifications as entitling you to the privileges of my kingdom; but, be it known to you, that the very beſt of you are as far from having any thing to recommend you to theſe priv-

ileges as little infants ; and if you receive them at all, it muſt be in the ſame way in which they are extended to them, by the free gift of God."

On another occaſion, mentioned by three of the evangeliſts, we find him noticing young children, and ſpeaking of them in a moſt remarkable manner. Having taken one up into his arms, he ſaid, *Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.—It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.—The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.—Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.* I know not how others may underſtand this language of our Saviour, but to me, it ſounds as pointedly againſt the principles and practice of our Baptiſt brethren as though it had been deſigned for an expreſs warning againſt their miſtakes. Can we, my hearers, doubt whether it be the will of the ſecond Adam, the covenant Head of all the redeemed, that the children of his people ſhould be baptized into his name, after we have ſeen and contemplated him in the atitude in which he is here exhibited, holding a little child in his arms, and declaring it not to be the will of his heavenly Father that any ſuch little one ſhould periſh ; that though all be in danger through the original apoſtacy, yet *since the Son of man is come to save that which was lost*, he, in ſpecial,

claims little children as the objects of his redemption, and having a peculiar affection for them, requires them to be received, acknowledged, and treated as his members; hereby promising that any kindnesses rendered to them for his sake, shall be accepted and rewarded as done to himself; and solemnly cautioning his disciples, and through them, all others, against overlooking, neglecting, or in any way despising such little ones; for as his members, they are the charge of those exalted beings who stand in the presence of God, and have the angels of heaven for their guardians?

These ideas of the discipleship of little children, and of the estimation in which they are held by Christ, taught by himself in the course of his personal ministry, may assist us in understanding his final commission to his apostles, directing them, by the rite of baptism, to enrol all nations in the number of his visible subjects: *Go ye and teach* (the import of the Greek word is *disciple* or *proselyte*) *all nations, baptizing them.* Could these orders be fulfilled without the admission of infants into the church? Do not children form a numerous and important part of every nation? Are they not always included in the meaning of the word? Does not the term, in every language, comprehend both sexes, and every age; from an infant of a day to the hoary head? Is it conceivable that the apostles, after having so repeatedly seen little children in the gracious arms of their Saviour, again and

again witneſſed the tender expreſſions of his favour and affection towards them, been themſelves the objects of his diſpleaſure, and ſuffered his rebuke for keeping them from him, heard him ſolemnly pronouncing them *his* ſubjects, and declaring that *whoever receiveth them in his name*, receiveth him ;—after all this, is it conceivable that when they admitted parents into the number of viſible diſciples, they ſhould reject their infant offspring, and withhold from them the diſcriminating ſeal of diſcipleſhip ? Being commanded to baptize all nations, would they have denied baptiſm to the children in every nation ? They knew what the tenour of God's covenant had always been, that when of old, *the gospel was preached unto Abraham*, its promiſe was to him and his ſeed, his whole family being intereſted in it, and diſtinguiſhed by its appointed token ; that thus, in the line of his deſcendants, children continued to be included in the covenant with their parents, from generation to generation, down to the then preſent time. They alſo knew that when any of the heathen were proſelyted to the religion of the Jews, the children of ſuch proſelytes were always included in the profeſſion of their parents, and by circumciſion and the other rites then in uſe, became as regular members of the Jewiſh church as the children of Jews themſelves. When therefore the period arrived for extending to all the families of the earth, privileges which had hitherto been peculiar to the fami-

ly of Abraham, and the apoſtles were commiſſioned for the purpoſe ; muſt they not have concluded that according to all former uſage, the children of thoſe other families were to be proſelyted with their parents ?

It will be ſaid, that inſtruction precedes baptiſm. With reſpect to adults, this is ſo far true, that there muſt be a profeſſed willingneſs to receive inſtruction. Such a willingneſs, however, ſeems to have been the only pre-requiſite deemed neceſſary by the apoſtles. When any hearer of the goſpel was ſo far convinced of its truth as to expreſs a willingneſs to enter the ſchool of Chriſt in order to further inſtruction, he was, by baptiſm, forthwith ſo entered and put upon the liſt of diſciples. This is the preciſe meaning of the command to *disciple* or *proselyte*. It was thus that the apoſtles fulfilled their commiſſion. They perſuaded as many as poſſible, in this way, to become diſciples. The multitudes baptized on the very day on which they began to be inſtructed, muſt have been, with reſpect to chriſtian knowledge, but babes indeed. Thus, however, they, and with them their children, were put in the way to learn. The latter, according to their age and ſtanding, and with reſpect to what the chriſtian covenant required of them, might be as perfect as their parents. Chriſtians comparatively the moſt eminent, are but learners : they know but in part, and are ſanctified but in part. The grades in

Chriſt's ſchool are various and proportioned to the ages, capacities and opportunities of all the ſcholars, from the infant to the old man, and from the newly converted pagan to the learned rabbi in Iſrael. The Baptiſts confidently pronounce young children incapable of the qualifications of Chriſt's diſciples. Their modeſty would be more apparent in ſubmitting to *his* judgment; and juſtneſs of obſervation might lead them to a better opinion of the capacities and early improvements of children. After their birth, not many weeks, perhaps not many days paſs, before they begin to learn. Though it may be ſome time before they will be able to underſtand the chriſtian doctrines, yet, favoured with the tuition of chriſtian parents, and conſtantly experiencing a chriſtian treatment, they may very early poſſeſs the very temper of Chriſt's ſubjects.

But, admitting that in early infancy children are incapable of inſtruction, this can be no argument againſt their being made diſciples. Thus they are entered into Chriſt's ſchool, and deſtined to learn of him. When it has been agreed to ſend a child to any particular maſter, he is thereupon called the ſcholar of that maſter, though as yet he has not begun to learn. In Numbers iii. 28. we thus read with reference to the Kohathites, "In the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were eight thouſand and ſix hundred, *keeping the charge of the ſanctuary.*" If Jewiſh infants of a

month old, might be, not only the disciples of Moses, but officers under him, *keepers* of the charge of the sanctuary, why may not christian infants be the disciples of Christ ?—God promised Abraham, *in thy seed shall all nations be blessed.* In fulfilment of the promise, Christ commanded his apostles, *to disciple all nations, baptizing them.* Will any undertake to prove that neither in the promise, nor in the command, the word *nations* includes children ? Had the command been as the Jewish zealots at Antioch understood it, Acts xv. that all nations were *to be circumcised after the manner of Moses*, every one would have supposed that children were included. Why then should not this be supposed, when the same purpose is to be answered by baptism ? This latter rite was not, in that age, a novelty. Of the whole congregation of Israel, upon their first entering into covenant with God after their exit from Egypt, St. Paul says, that *they were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.* From ancient writers, both Jewish and Christian, it appears that in conformity to this original baptism of their whole nation, the Jews were accustomed to baptize their proselytes ; and that on such occasions, the whole family of the proselyte, as included in his profession, were baptized with him. When John the Baptist was asked, *why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ ?* the question implies that, as their nation of old had been baptized unto Moses, so the Jews expect-

ed that, at the coming of the Meſſiah, they would be again baptized as proſelytes to him. When, therefore, the apoſtles were ſent forth for this purpoſe, would they not be led by the prior uſe of baptiſm, to apply it to children with their parents ?

Our brethren aſk, " can infants repent and believe ?" They might, with as much reaſon, aſk, Can infants be ſaved ? Theſe conditions of adult baptiſm are alſo the expreſs conditions of ſalvation. But if the ſalvation of an infant depends not upon theſe conditions, no more does his baptiſm. Our Saviour has taught us, that none can be ſaved but thoſe *who are born of water and of the Spirit.* In hope that our infants may be born of the Spirit, we waſh them with water. But to pretend that they ought not to be ſo waſhed, becauſe they cannot believe, is as abſurd as it would be to pretend that they ought not to *eat* becauſe they cannot *work.*—What are the excellencies of faith and repentance that, by virtue of theſe qualifications recently obtained, adults only ſhould be conſidered as meet for diſcipleſhip to the excluſion of unoffending infants ? When an old ſinner laments that hitherto he has lived worſe than in vain, that his whole life has paſſed in *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath ;* does this his repentance render him more worthy of a relation to Chriſt, than they are who have never offended ? If, by faith and repentance through the infinite grace of the goſpel, the ſpots of ſuch leopards may be waſh-

ed out, the fable hue of fuch Ethiops may be changed; is it not fuppofable that to a holy God, new born infants, juft emerged from *his* forming hand and free from all actual guilt, when prefented in baptifm by chriftian parents, may be an offering full as acceptable? Why fhould they not be thus offered? If parents belong to the number of Chrift's vifible fheep, why fhould they not bring their lambs into the fame fold with themfelves, to feed in the fame pafture, and be under the care and guardianfhip of the fame divine Shepherd?

To me, it is matter of admiration how any can ferioufly doubt whether children were, in fact, thus introduced by the apoftles, when we find that of fix baptifms recorded as adminiftered by St. Paul, three of them were fo many houfeholds, that of Stephanas, of Lydia, and of the jailer. The circumftances of the two laft are particularly related; and from the relation it appears that each of thefe families were baptized on the profeffed faith of their refpective heads, there being no intimation of any profeffion on the part of the other members. If children, in all ages, were to be excluded from the ordinance, is it not aftonifhing that the Holy Ghoft, under whofe guidance the fcriptures were written, fhould have ufed a term which naturally leads every unprejudiced reader immediately to think of children? Not only in common fpeech, but throughout the Bible, the word *household* fuggefts the idea of children. When Pharaoh invited

Joſeph's brethren to bring their *households* into Egypt, they thereupon carried their wives and their *little ones*, Geneſis xlvi. 5. When, in 1 Timothy, iii. 4. St. Paul ſays, *A biſhop must rule well his own house* or *household* (for it is the ſame word,) this explanation follows, "having his *children* in ſubjection with all gravity." The baptiſm of houſeholds, then, unqueſtionably implies that of children, together with that of other young perſons belonging to the family in the condition of ſervants.

You will not wonder, my hearers, that ſimilar inſtances of the baptiſm of children occur not more frequently in the Acts of the apoſtles, or that more upon the ſubject is not found in their ſpeeches and writings, when you ſhall reflect that at the commencement of chriſtianity, the great and immediate object was, to proſelyte adults. If houſeholders could be brought over to the faith, none, in that age, doubted of their families. The ideas entertained by the ancients, of the oneneſs of a man's family with himſelf, of his authority over them, and reſponſibility for them, were much higher and more ſtrict, than thoſe which prevail in modern times. By the laws of Romulus, children were placed under the unlimited control and at the abſolute diſpoſal of their parents; and by the laws of Moſes, they were ſo far conſidered as the property of the father that, if he became a bankrupt, they were liable to be ſeized among his other effects,

and ſold into ſlavery, or retained in bondage to the creditor. It was therefore taken for granted univerſally, both among Jews and Gentiles, that all the branches of a family were included in the profeſſion of its head. When the parents embraced chriſtianity, and ſubmitted to baptiſm, that of their children followed as a thing of courſe. As this accorded with the ſenſe of all men, and with the cuſtoms and uſages univerſally predominant in that age, and was never once called in queſtion, there was no occaſion for any particular ſtatement upon the ſubject.

Our Baptiſt brethren endeavour to evade the force of all our arguments by urging, that "no perſons are the proper ſubjects of a poſitive inſtitute who are not expreſsly mentioned in the inſtitute itſelf." But do they, in other reſpects, adhere to this rule? I charitably ſuppoſe that thoſe of them who are ſeriouſly religious, make conſcience of keeping holy the firſt day of the week; but where has Chriſt or his apoſtles ſaid, "Thou ſhalt remember the firſt day of the week to keep it holy?" They admit females to the Lord's-table; but where is it ſaid, "Let women, as well as men, do this in remembrance of me?" I am far from intimating that they are wrong in theſe obſervances; but ſurely there is as much evidence from ſcripture to prove that we are right in the baptiſm of infants. Indeed, with reſpect to this ordinance of baptiſm, they require the immerſion of the whole body,

and deny baptiſm in every other form ; but where do they find the divine injunction, " Thou ſhalt baptize by immerſion only ?" If they think two or three words, vaguely and incorrectly tranſlated, to be an authority equivalent to a command ; we think that we have produced incomparably better, more ſubſtantial and ſatisfactory proofs of the diſcipleſhip of infants, of their being included in the covenant with their parents, and of their ſcripture right to the ſeal of that covenant. They were thus included in it from its firſt propoſal to an apoſtate world. By the expreſs command of God, they received the external token of the covenant from the days of Abraham down to the coming of our Saviour. This covenant conſtituted the church and kingdom of God, of which the Iſraelites were members and ſubjects. Its outward form and rites have been changed, but the qualifications of its ſubjects have been always the ſame. The prophets and apoſtles were all members and miniſters of the ſame church. When, for their rejection of the Meſſiah, the kingdom of God was taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles, the transfer made no alteration with reſpect to what is required in its ſubjects. The goſpel is but an illuſtration and fulfilment of God's promiſe in his covenant with Abraham, *in thy seed shall all nations be blessed.* For the carrying of this promiſe into effect, the apoſtles were ſent forth to *disciple all nations, baptizing them.* Authorized by this

commiſſion, they proclaimed the promiſe of grace as extending to children, with their parents, and baptized the families of believers, expreſsly declaring their children, as theirs, to be *saints*. While theſe truths are prominent in the word of God, there can be no reaſon to ſcruple the lawfulneſs of infant baptiſm. However faulty our churches may be in other reſpects, yet in this queſtion, we have the ſcriptures, as well as antiquity, and all the national churches in Chriſtendom, on our ſide.

As the mode of baptiſm by immerſion, and the excluſion of infants from the ordinance, are two diſtinct queſtions, having no apparent connection with each other, and draw after them trains of arguments equally ſeparate and diſtinct; it ſeems ſomewhat ſingular and unaccountable that theſe two points, ſo diſſimilar in themſelves, ſhould have been, for more than two centuries paſt, uniformly aſſociated in the minds of a particular ſect of chriſtians. It affords ſome room, at leaſt, for ſuſpicion that their opinions are formed not from evidence alone. I would not, however, be underſtood as inſinuating that there are no ſincere chriſtians among them. I rather hope that there may be ſome ſuch among each of the denominations in Chriſtendom, and ſhould rejoice to ſee all theſe different perſuaſions mutually extending their chriſtian charity towards each other. This would be a ſubſtantial proof of the reality of their religion. *By this*, ſays

our Saviour, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.*

The ſpirit of diviſion and ſeparation, which ſo generally marks thoſe of the Baptiſt perſuaſion, is moſt oppoſite to that of chriſtian charity. Their excluding all other chriſtians from fellowſhip with them, ſavours not a little of the ſpirit of thoſe ancient hypocrites who ſaid, *stand by thyself, come not near me; for I am holier than thou.* The very plea which they offer as an excuſe for this conduct, is, in itſelf, a further expreſſion of an aſſuming and arrogant ſpirit. "Ye have not been baptized," ſay they, "therefore we cannot commune with you." Thus they *judge their brethren*, deny their baptiſm, and *set them at nought* as unchriſtened heathens. By excluding us from the table of the Lord, they implicitly tell us that we cannot ſhare with them in a crucified Saviour. *Christ is not divided*, nor has he two tables, one for them and another for us. By engroſſing it to themſelves, they treat us as outcaſts.—When men have been once plunged, they ſeem to be incurably baptized into this uncharitableneſs, into a ſect or party, rather than into that religion which is intended for all nations, which breathes peace on earth and univerſal good will. In direct oppoſition to this ſpirit of the goſpel, they in this place, who have lately gone over to the Baptiſt perſuaſion, have thereupon withdrawn themſelves from this houſe of worſhip, from the word and ſacraments

here adminiſtered, from all connection with this chriſtian aſſembly, and are now ſetting up altar againſt altar. Thus ſchiſm, with all its attendant evils, has taken place. Could the great enemy of Chriſt and his church have hit upon a project more effectual for the ſubverſion of the general intereſts of religion? A houſe or a kingdom divided againſt itſelf, cannot ſtand. Of all the duties enjoined upon us in the goſpel, are there any upon which greater ſtreſs is laid, or more precepts and exhortations given, than upon thoſe of peace and union, brotherly love and mutual charity? *Behold, how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity!* Addreſſing himſelf to the Corinthians, St. Paul ſays, *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no divisions among you.* To the chriſtians at Rome, diſputing about religious ceremonies, he continues through the whole of the 14th. and part of the 15th. chapter of his epiſtle, to urge them to a mutual charity, notwithſtanding their different ſentiments. With all his apoſtolic authority he enjoins it upon each party to receive one another as brethren in good ſtanding. He clearly teaches the right of private judgment, and that no man ought to be cenſured for doing or not doing what he either does or forbears to do from a principle of obedience to the divine will. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.* In

matters of conſcience, we are accountable to God only. *Let every man*, therefore, *be fully perſuaded in his own mind.* While our brethren are left in the full enjoyment of this liberty, what juſt cauſe can they have for ſeparation? If with their new ideas of baptiſm, they have alſo obtained new hearts and right ſpirits; by continuing here, with theſe newly acquired principles of grace and holineſs, manifeſting themſelves in every good word and work, how much evil might have been prevented, and how greatly might the general intereſts of religion be advanced by ſhining examples of the power of Godlineſs! To the peace and welfare of the town, to the intereſts of civil ſociety, as well as to thoſe of religion, continued union would be exceedingly beneficial. For what are all theſe ſignal advantages ſacrificed? Can any believe that, with ſuch ſacrifices, the God of peace and the Prince of peace, are well pleaſed? Throughout the New Teſtament, ſchiſm appears in the catalogue of the moſt grievous ſins, is branded as the fruit of a carnal and fleſhly mind, and the authors and abettors of it are repreſented as dangerous aſſociates whom all ſerious chriſtians are required moſt heedfully to ſhun. The eminently pious, as well as learned *Baxter*, who, in his day, is ſaid to have written more books againſt the Baptiſts, than any other Britiſh author, gives it as his judgment that their ſpirit of ſeparation is the moſt dangerous of all their errors. "I am not," ſays he, "half ſo zealous to turn

men from the opinions of the Anabaptists, as I am to persuade both them and others, to live together in mutual love and church communion, notwithstanding such differences." While we continue to lament what was so sincerely lamented by this good man, and must forever be lamented by all good men; let it be our care, my brethren, so to conduct, that, if offences come, we may not be the faulty cause; and may the spirit of truth preserve us from every false way, and teach us how to walk so as to please God!

A

CHURCH OF GOD

DESCRIBED;

THE

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

STATED;

AND

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP ILLUSTRATED;

IN TWO

DISCOURSES.

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THE

NATURE AND DESIGN

OF A

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

1 CORIN. i. 2.

Unto the Church of God, which is at Corinth; to them who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

THAT we may better understand the apostle's idea of a church of God, we must bear in mind that the Corinthians, before the gospel was preached among them, were *gentiles carried away unto dumb idols, even as they were led.* Those of them who received the doctrine preached by the apostles, renounced the idolatrous forms and places of worship, and united together to worship God through Jesus Christ, in the manner which the gospel prescribes. *These* are called *a church*, which in the original language, properly signifies a *select company*, or an assembly called forth from the rest of mankind for some particular purpose, more especially for the purpose of religious worship. The church in Corinth was that number of persons, who had come out from among their idolatrous fellow citizens for the true worship of God in Christ.

The apoſtle deſcribes them, *as ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus, and called to be ſaints.* We cannot ſuppoſe, that by this deſcription he intended to repreſent *all* the members of the Corinthian church to be *gracious, godly* perſons: many paſſages, in this and his ſecond epiſtle to them, import that he thought otherwiſe; but theſe phraſes rather ſignify, that they had been called out of the world, and ſeparated from others, that they might be a peculiar people to God. *They were called to be holy.* The words, *ſanctified, ſaints,* and *holy*, applied to bodies of men, are uſually to be taken in the ſame general ſenſe, as *chriſtians, diſciples*, and *brethren;* to expreſs their *viſible* relation and *profeſſed* character, rather than a certain judgment concerning their habitual temper. The ſabbath, the temple, its utenſils, and the ground on which it ſtood, are called *holy*, and ſaid to be *ſanctified*, becauſe they were ſeparated from a common to a ſacred uſe. The nation of the Jews, in which, at its beſt ſtate, were great numbers of ungodly men, is called holy, as being ſeparated from other nations, for the ſervice of the true God. Moſes ſays. *Ye are a holy people to the Lord, a peculiar treaſure, a kingdom of prieſts.* So the chriſtian church is called *a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.* The word *ſaints*, in many places ſtands oppoſed, not to unſound Chriſtians, but to the heathen world, particularly in the paſſages which ſpeak of perſecution againſt the *ſaints*, of miniſtering to the *ſaints*, and of diſtributing to the neceſſities of the *ſaints;* and in that remarkable paſſage which denominates the children of a believer *holy*, in diſtinction from the children of the unbelieving, who are called *unclean.*

THE apoſtle farther deſcribes the Corinthian church, as conſiſting of thoſe who *call on the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt;* who own him to be their Lord and Saviour, profeſs to hope for ſalvation through him and worſhip God in his name.

HE directs his epiſtle *to all, who, in every place, call on the name of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, both theirs and ours.* In this addreſs, he ſignifies, that there is a ſacred relation ſubſiſting among all Chriſtians in every place, and that, as they profeſs ſubjection to one common Lord, ſo they ought to maintain communion one with another.

THE words of our text will naturally lead us to conſider,

I. THE *nature* of a church of God.

II. THE *end* of its inſtitution.

III. THE relation which *children* bear to it.

IV. THE *qualifications* requiſite for admiſſion into it. And,

V. THE *fellowſhip*, which ought to ſubſiſt among its members.

I. WE are to conſider the *nature* of a church of God.

ITS general nature, as a ſelect company, called forth from the world, for the worſhip and ſervice of God, we have already ſtated in the opening of our text. Some further illuſtrations, however, will be neceſſary.

THE church is ſometimes diſtinguiſhed into the *invisible* and the *visible* church. By the *invisible* church, is intended the whole number of real ſaints in all places and ages; the whole family in Heaven and earth; thoſe whom Chriſt will gather together in one

body in Heaven. This is that MOUNT ZION, THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, which consists of an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the general assembly and church of the first born, who were enrolled in Heaven. By the *visible* church are meant all those who have been visibly dedicated to God in Christ, and have not, by infidelity, heresy, or scandal, cut themselves off from the society of Christians; or, in the words of our apostle, *all who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE visible church is again distinguished into the *catholic* or *general* church, and into *local* or *particular* churches. The word is often used to denote all the *professed* people of God in all nations and ages. In this large sense it is to be understood, when Christ is said to be made head of the church, and the church is described as subject to him. The whole Jewish nation, which was chosen of God, to be a peculiar people to himself, is called *the church.* It is said of Moses, *he was in the church in the wilderness.*

WHEN this people, by their great and increasing corruption, were ripening apace for destruction, God sent his own Son, the promised Redeemer to rescue from ruin his sinking church, and place it on a larger and surer establishment. By his teaching, and the ministry of his apostles, who were trained up under his immediate discipline, a considerable number of subjects were gained over to his kingdom, while he was on earth. Just before his ascension, he gave these apostles a commission to go forth, and spread his doctrine, and collect subjects among all nations,

His church, which before ſtood on the foundation of the prophets, now ſtands on the foundation of the apoſtles alſo, he himſelf being the corner ſtone, in which both parts of the foundation meet and are united. The church was formerly limited to one nation, but now it is indiſcriminately extended to all. In the city of Jeruſalem there were many, who, before the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, conſorted for the worſhip of God in Chriſt. To theſe were ſoon added multitudes, who continued in the apoſtles' doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. They were called *the church*. After the goſpel was ſpread to ſuch an extent, that it was no longer poſſible for all the believers to attend the worſhip of God in the ſame place, particular religious ſocieties, in divers places, were formed for the convenience of worſhip, each of which had the name of *a church*.

These ſocieties of Chriſtians, united in different places for mutual edification in the joint worſhip of God, are what we mean by *particular* churches, in diſtinction from the *catholic* or *univerſal* church. Thus the Chriſtians in Corinth, thoſe in Galatia, thoſe in Epheſus, thoſe in Theſſalonica, are called *a church*. But as all theſe particular churches received the ſame goſpel, maintained the ſame form of worſhip, and profeſſed ſubjection to the ſame Lord, ſo they are often conſidered as *one* church. Though we read of many churches, yet theſe are only ſo many different parts of the ſame univerſal church. They are members of the ſame great body, apartments of the ſame houſe, provinces of the ſame empire. With regard to their ſeveral juriſdictions and places of worſhip, they are diſtinct; but yet one in the main, as they call

on the ſame Jeſus, their common Saviour and Lord.

As there was in the apoſtolic times, ſo there is now, frequent occaſion for new churches to be formed. But from the preceding obſervations, it appears, that whenever a new church is erected, careful regard ſhould be had to her communion with other churches, as well as to the communion of her own members among themſelves; otherwiſe the body of Chriſt is divided, and the bond of peace is broken.

Among the members of every particular church, there is always ſuppoſed to be a ſolemn covenant and agreement to walk together in the commands and ordinances of Chriſt, to watch over one another in meekneſs and love, and to be fellow-helpers to the kingdom of God. The church in Corinth is ſaid to *come together into one place.* The church in Jeruſalem is cautioned *not to forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together;* and required, to *exhort one another, and to conſider one another, that they may provoke to love and to good works.* And Chriſtians are are enjoined to *be ſubject one to another.*

The covenant between the members of a particular church, to walk together in the ordinances of Chriſt, is of ſacred obligation; and when any of them have occaſion to remove to another church, they ſhould do it in a manner conſiſtent with Chriſtian order, peace and communion. When a number of Chriſtians unite in a new church, ſtill they muſt conſider themſelves as members of the general body, and ſeek, not merely their own profit but the profit of many.

II. The *end* for which a church was inſtituted, and the purpoſe for which we are called into it, is what we propoſed, in the ſecond place, to conſider.

CHRIST's kingdom is not of this world. As the nature, ſo the deſign of it is purely ſpiritual; it is, that in the enjoyment of ſuitable means we may be trained up in knowledge and holineſs; and thus formed to a meetneſs for future glory.

IT is ſaid, *the Lord added to the church daily ſuch as ſhould be ſaved.* This is not to be underſtood as importing, that all who joined themſelves to the church were finally ſaved. There were in that, as there are in all ages, many who call Chriſt their Lord, and eat and drink in his preſence, but ſtill are workers of iniquity. But they are called *the ſaved*, becauſe they are admitted to the offers and means of ſalvation. In this ſenſe alſo, baptiſm is ſaid to *ſave* us; not as conveying an immediate right to ſalvation, but as being the appointed way of introduction into the viſible church, where the means of ſalvation are afforded. In the ſame ſenſe we are to underſtand thoſe paſſages, where ſalvation is promiſed to whole families on the faith of the head. Not that *his* faith entitles *them* to eternal life, but that it brings them into the viſible church, and to the enjoyment of the means of ſalvation. *Noah, by faith, prepared an ark to the ſaving of his houſe; the like figure whereunto, even baptiſm doth now ſave us.*

As without holineſs, none can be admitted into God's heavenly kingdom, *Chriſt gave himſelf for the church, that he might ſanctify and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the word, that he might preſent it to himſelf a glorious church, not having ſpot or wrinkle or any ſuch thing; but that it ſhould be holy and without blemiſh.* The church, in our text, is deſcribed, as conſiſting of thoſe *who are called to be*

holy. Chriſt has ſet in his church, teachers for her edification, *that we might all come in the unity of faith and knowledge, to the measure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt; and profeſſing the truth in love, might grow up into him in all things.*

Love is a moſt important branch of goſpel holineſs. Chriſtians *are chosen in Chriſt, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love;* and might *purify their ſouls in obeying the truth, through the ſpirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.* Chriſt has, therefore, appointed that his diſciples, dwelling together in ſocial connection, and maintaining fellowſhip in religious duties, ſhould increaſe and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men. They are directed *to forbear one another in love, and keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace, becauſe there is one body*, or church, of which they are all members, *and one ſpirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptiſm.* In order to their enjoying the grace of God, for their increaſe and edification, they muſt, like the parts of a building, be *fitly framed into each other, and be builded together for an habitation of God through the ſpirit.*

Having illuſtrated the nature and deſign of a church of God, we will now attend to the next propoſed inquiry.

III. What relation *children* bear to the church?

This will be neceſſary, previouſly to our ſtating the qualifications of adult proſelytes.

When firſt the apoſtles went forth to preach the goſpel, and erect churches in the world, mankind in general were in a ſtate of *heathenism*, or *judaism;* and, either had not heard of the goſpel, or did not

believe it to be divine. From among these, were they to make proselytes to Christianity.

What they required of the proselytes, whom they admitted into the church of God, was a professed belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. This profession of faith in Christ necessarily implied a promise of obedience to him.

Now as the apostles admitted adult proselytes into the church by baptism, so there is sufficient ground to believe, that they admitted to this ordinance the children of proselytes, in token of God's merciful regard to them, and of their parents' obligation to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In this general sense, the baptised offspring of believers are within the church; having God's covenant seal upon them, and being under the care of those who have covenanted to bring them up for him.

As many as are comprehended within God's covenant, and are the subjects of its gracious promises, undeniably belong to the church; for this is founded on the covenant. That the children of professed believers are within the covenant, is evident from passages of scripture, too numerous to be here particularly recited. The promise to Abraham was made also to his infant seed, who were to recieve the seal and token of the promise, as well as he; and as many as received it not, were said to have broken God's covenant; and these were to be cut off, or excluded from among their people. Had they not been within the covenant, and among the people of God, their want of the seal could not have been a breach of the covenant, or an exclusion from the people. Moses says to the congregation of Israel, *Ye stand all of you before the Lord your God; all the*

men of Israel, your little ones and your wives ; that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, that he may establish thee for a people to himself, as he hath sworn to Abraham. Expreſs promiſes are made to children, as the ſeed of thoſe who are in covenant, particularly the promiſe of God's word, and of his ſpirit. *God established a testimony in Jacob, which he commanded the fathers, that they should make it known to their children, that the generation to come might also know it. Circumcision has much the advantage every way, chiefly because to them are committed the oracles of God. To Jacob his servant, and to Israel his chosen,* God promiſes, *I will pour my spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses.* This is God's covenant with them who turn from tranſgreſſion in Jacob. *My spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed.* Infants are called the children of the church ; and the gentiles are deſcribed in prophecy, as coming to the church with their children in their arms. *All these gather themselves together and come to thee ;* to Zion, God's church, *they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.* The children of thoſe who are in covenant, are diſtinguiſhed from others as God's children, born unto him. God ſays to his ancient church, *I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine ; but thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, which thou hast born unto me, and hast sacrificed them : thou hast slain my children.* It is foretold, that in the time of the church's proſperity, *the people shall not labour*

in vain, nor bring forth for trouble, for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. The Redeemer is described by Isaiah, as one *who shall feed his flock like a shepherd, and shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom.* When he appeared on earth, he commanded that children should be brought to him: those who were brought, he took into his arms, and blessed, declaring them subjects of his kingdom. But in what sense are they such, if they belong not to his church, but to the kingdom of Satan? When Christ instituted the ordinance of baptism, he pointed out the subjects of it in such general terms, as might naturally be supposed to include children; and his apostles, who knew how he had ever treated children, who had heard his directions concerning them, and who could not be ignorant, that, under former dispensations of the covenant, children were comprehended with their parents, must understand them to be included in this instruction, *disciple all nations, baptizing them.* Accordingly, in the first instance of their administering baptism, after this commission, they placed the reason of it, and the right to it, on a basis which alike supports the baptism of believers, and of their children. *Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is to you and to your children.* They considered the children of believers as holy, in distinction from the children of unbelievers. And it appears to have been their practice, when they baptized a believing householder, to baptize also his household; those who were *his*, and under his government. And it is observable, that among all the instances of baptism, mentioned in the New

Teſtament, we find not one baptized at adult age, who appears to have been born of Chriſtian parents; but they were all proſelytes from judaiſm, or from heatheniſm.

Our Engliſh word CHURCH, ſignifies the houſe, or family of the Lord. It is a well choſen word; for the church is often called, a *family* or *household*. But who needs to be told, that children are members of the family in which they are born? It is often called a *city*, a *nation*, a *people*. But who ever imagined that theſe terms excluded children? If a city is incorporated are not children members of the corporation, as well as their parents? If a privilege is granted to a people, do not children become intitled to it. If a form of government is ſettled in a nation, do not children come under the form.

You will aſk, how can children be brought within the church without their own conſent? But as well may you aſk, how ſhould they be born under the goſpel; or how ſhould they be created rational beings, without their own conſent? If it is a privilege to enjoy the example, inſtruction and prayers of good men, and to be placed under the care of thoſe who are ſolemnly bound to give them a pious education, then it is a privilege to be born within the church, and to receive in childhood the ſeal of the covenant. And will any complain, that God beſtows on them mercies, before they had conſented to take them?

Certain religious duties are incumbent on children, as ſoon as they arrive to a natural capacity to perform them. But has not God a right to enjoin ſuch duties as his wiſdom ſees fit? Muſt he conſult his creatures to know what laws he may make for them? Was not the covenant in the plains of Moab made with little ones, as well as with the men of If-

rael? With those who are not, as well as with those who were then present? Are there not moral obligations which result from our rational nature, and from our place in the creation, as well as from our special covenant relation to God? Shall we conclude that all these obligations are void, for want of our previous consent? To the validity of contracts between man and man, who stand on the foot of equality, mutual consent is necessary: But God is a sovereign, and 'his covenant he *commands* us.' When he promises us blessings, and enjoins duties as conditions of the blessings, he states to us the tenor of his covenant, and, by his supreme authority, brings us under the obligations of it, whether we have consented to it, or not.

Now if the children of believers are under the covenant, and within the church of God, they ought to receive the seal and token of their relation to him; to be taught, as soon as they are able to understand, the nature of religion; and to be considered, when they come forward in life, as under the watch of the church. They should be nursed at her side; and, when they have competency of knowledge, should be invited to her actual communion. If they behave in a manner unworthy of their relation, they should be treated with, and exhorted to repentance. If they prove contumacious and incorrigible, they are, after due patience, to be cut off from their people. Such appears to be the state of children.

IV. We proceed to inquire, what qualifications are requisite for the admission of adults into the church, and for their enjoyment of all gospel ordinances?

The question is twofold: *First*, What a church ought to require of those whom she admits to her

communion? And, *Secondly*, What qualifications a perſon muſt find in himſelf to juſtify his coming to the communion?

The firſt queſtion is, What a church ought to require of thoſe whom ſhe admits to her communion?

The anſwer in general is, She is to require the ſame as the apoſtles required.

Those whom the apoſtles admitted to fellowſhip with them in breaking of bread, and in prayer, being firſt inſtructed in the doctrines and evidences of Chriſtianity, profeſſed to believe, that *this* was a divine religion.

The Jews, who were baptized on the day of pentecoſt, gladly received the word of the goſpel. The eunuch, who was baptized by Philip, declared his belief, that Jeſus was the Son of God. The heart of Lydia was opened to attend to the doctrine of Paul; and ſhe was judged faithful to the Lord. The jailor is ſaid to have believed in God. When the people of Samaria believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were baptized, both men and women.

The churches were enjoined to put away from among them thoſe wicked perſons who would not be reclaimed. We may, therefore, conclude, that ſuch were not received without a profeſſion of repentance.

A Christian church is, then, to require of thoſe, whom ſhe admits to her communion, theſe three things; a competent knowledge of the eſſential doctrines and precepts of religion; a profeſſed belief of, and ſubjection to them; and a blameleſs converſation; or, where this had been wanting, a profeſſion of repentance. Theſe things are, in the nature of the

caſe, neceſſary; for it is palpably abſurd for a man to join himſelf to a Chriſtian church, and attend upon its ordinances, unleſs he underſtands the nature, and believes the truth of that religion on which it is founded; and has ſuch a ſenſe of its importance, as to reſolve that he will be governed by it. And every perſon of competent knowledge, a good profeſſion, and a correſpondent life, has a right, in the view of the church, to the enjoyment of goſpel ordinances, whenever he claims it.

WHATEVER may be the opinion of a church, concerning the neceſſity of ſaving grace to qualify one, in the ſight of God, for Chriſtian communion, ſhe cannot juſtly exclude the perſon we have deſcribed; becauſe a good profeſſion, and a converſation agreeable to it, is all the evidence which ſhe can have in his favor. She can judge the heart only by viſible fruits. The controverſy concerning the neceſſity of internal holineſs, in the preſent caſe, can have no reference to the real practice of the church, in admitting members; for whether ſhe judges this to be a neceſſary qualification or not, ſtill ſhe muſt conduct in the ſame manner, and admit the ſame perſons. Namely, thoſe, and only thoſe, who have ſufficient knowledge of the goſpel, profeſs a belief of, and ſubjection to the goſpel, and contradict not that profeſſion by an ungodly converſation. She may, perhaps, think proper to require of her members a particular relation of their Chriſtian experiences. But be this relation ever ſo full, ſtill it is but the evidence of words—of a good profeſſion: The real ſincerity of the heart, after all, is known only to him, who ſeeth not as man ſeeth.

A CHURCH has no right, *on mere jealouſy*, to ex-

clude from her communion any one who offers himſelf. She muſt firſt make it appear, that he is, by ignorance, hereſy or wickedneſs, diſqualified for communion. It is not incumbent on him to demonſtrate his inward grace; but on the church to prove his want of it. The burden of proof, in this caſe, lies wholly on the church; not on the claimant. If one claims privileges, the church is not to reject him, in a ſovereign, arbitrary manner, of her own will, without offering reaſons: She is either to admit him, or ſhew cauſe why ſhe refuſes. If ſhe ſhall convict him of any diſqualification, ſtill ſhe is not to treat him as an enemy, but admoniſh him as a brother: She is not to abandon him at once, but labour for his amendment. To reject claimants, in any other way, than by conviction on fair and open trial, is to ſet up a tyranny in the church, which Chriſt has no where warranted. It is to ſubvert that liberty with which Chriſt has made us free. The church ought to caution all againſt hypocriſy and diſſimulation in their approaches to divine ordinances; but ſhe is not to aſſume the judgment of men's hearts, raſhly intruding into things, which ſhe has not ſeen, and which belong only to God.

We are to aim at perfection, both as private chriſtians, and as churches. But we are to purſue this aim in a ſcriptural way; not by uſurping God's prerogative, or by excluding from our charity and fellowſhip, all who hope humbly and ſpeak modeſtly; all who cannot give the higheſt proof of their godly ſincerity; but by cleanſing *ourſelves* from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, and by conſidering one another to provoke unto love and good works.

After all, there will be bad, as well as good, in Chriſtian ſocieties. *The kingdom of Heaven is like a net caſt into the ſea, which gathered of every kind; and when it was full, they drew it to ſhore, and gathered the good into veſſels and caſt the bad away. So ſhall it be in the end of the world; then the wicked ſhall be ſevered from among the juſt.*

Having ſhewn what a church is to require of thoſe whom ſhe admits to her communion, we proceed to the ſecond queſtion.

What qualifications a perſon muſt find in himſelf to juſtify him in entering into the church, and attending on all goſpel ordinances?

That we may bring this queſtion within a narrow compaſs, and reduce it to a ſingle point, it will be neceſſary to remove ſome things, which have often been blended with it, and occaſioned much confuſion in thinking and arguing upon it.

I. The queſtion is not, Whether every perſon educated under the goſpel, is *in duty bound* to attend on all divine ordinances in ſome Chriſtian church? For this is univerſally granted.

Religion, in all its branches, is indiſpenſibly enjoined on all men. Chriſt calls all men to be his diſciples, to profeſs themſelves ſuch, and to act accordingly, on pain of final rejection from his preſence. No man can free himſelf from his obligation to enter into the church, any more than he can free himſelf from his obligation to prayer, or any other duty. His wickedneſs may be a *bar* in the way of his admiſſion; but it cannot be an excuſe for his voluntary neglect. It is abſurd to ſuppoſe, that one's ſins ſhould vacate his obligations to obedience. They who apprehend that they have no right to the communion of ſaints, ought by no means, to make themſelves eaſy in thi

ſtate. The command ſtill extends to them; and their immediate concern ſhould be, to repent of that ſinfulneſs, which obſtructs their compliance with it.

2. The queſtion is not, whether one ought to come to the communion in an *impenitent, unconverted* ſtate; for no man is allowed to continue in ſuch a ſtate. The ſcripture never propoſes, or anſwers this queſtion, whether a man may attend on this, or that ordinance, while he remains impenitent in his ſins? becauſe it grants no man permiſſion to remain ſo; but commands all men, every where, to repent. It requires them to perform every duty in a pious and holy manner. It allows no neglect of, or hypocriſy and formality in duty. The man, who calls himſelf a ſinner, is not to imagine, that the ſame duties, or the ſame tempers, are not required of him, as of others; for all are required to be holy in all manner of converſation, and to be deeply humble for all the corruptions of their heart, and errors of their life. But,

3. It will be ſaid, though no man ought to remain in a ſinful ſtate, yet there are many who know themſelves to be in ſuch a ſtate; many who evidently find, that they have no governing regard to God and his commands, but are under the prevailing love of ſin and the world: Now, ought they, while they perceive themſelves to be in this ſtate, to come into the church and attend on the holy communion?

If any aſk this queſtion, my anſwer is, it is a queſtion in which no body is concerned. It cannot poſſibly be a caſe of conſcience with any man. The perſon here ſuppoſed is one, who knows himſelf to be an habitual ſinner; one who has no governing regard to his duty; but is prevailingly bent to wickedneſs; and, therefore, he cannot be ſuppoſed to have any conſci-

entious ſolicitude about his duty in this matter. It is abſurd to imagine, he ſhould be ſolicitous to know and do his duty here, and yet have no regard to it in any thing elſe. If in other external acts of duty he is influenced by unworthy motives, the ſame unworthy motives, and not a regard to the will of God, would influence him in coming into the church. The queſtion is merely a matter of ſpeculation; it concerns no man's practice. One, who lives regardleſs of the will of God in general, is juſt as regardleſs of it in the caſe under conſideration. He does not wiſh to be inſtructed in the matter, that he may conform to the divine will: if he did, he would be as careful to conform to it in things which are already plain. The ſcripture puts no ſuch caſe, for it is not a ſuppoſable caſe, that a man, whoſe heart is ſet in him to do evil, ſhould have any conſcientious ſcruples in this point, or any other. The proper anſwer to ſuch an inquirer will be, you are in a moſt awful ſtate, under the power and guilt of ſin. So long as you live in ſubjection to the fleſh, you cannot pleaſe God. You are expoſed to everlaſting condemnation. Repent, therefore, of your wickedneſs, ſeek God's forgiveneſs, and henceforward walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameleſs.

4. The only queſtion which can be a caſe of conſcience, and which it concerns us to anſwer, is this; what a *ſerious* perſon ought to do, who is in doubt concerning his ſpiritual ſtate?

He believes the goſpel to be divine, has ſome ſenſe of its importance, and feels a concern to obtain the ſalvation which it brings. It is his deſire to know, and his purpoſe to do, the will of God. But ſtill he finds ſo many corruptions in his heart, and devia-

tions from duty in his practice, that he dares not conclude himself in a state of grace. If he has hopes, they are mingled with painful fears. Now ought such a person to come within the church, and participate in all divine ordinances? Or is he to delay till his fears are dispelled?

This is the real state of the question; and can any hesitate what answer to give?

We have before shewn, that the purpose for which men are called into a church state is that, in the enjoyment of suitable means, they may be trained up in knowledge and holiness, to a preparation for future glory. And if we have the same end in attending on ordinances, as God had in instituting them, it cannot be doubted but we are qualified for the enjoyment of them. If then we can say, our end in coming to the communion is, that we may conform to God's will, may be in the way of his blessing, and may be directed and quickened in his service, we are undoubtedly warranted to approach it.

For a person to judge whether he may come to the communion, the question rather is, what are his present views, desires and purposes; than what is the habitual state of his soul? The former may be known by immediate inward reflection: the latter is to be discovered only by a course of examination and experience.

Let us now attend to the practice of the apostles.

The Jews, who assembled at the temple on the day of pentecost, to celebrate that festival, beheld with indignation, and treated with mockery, the miraculous gifts of the spirit, then bestowed on the disciples of Jesus, in confirmation of his divine authority. Peter,

on this occaſion, roſe up, and, in a pertinent diſcourſe, laid before them ſuch ſtriking evidence of Jeſus being the promiſed Meſſiah, that thouſands were convinced of their great guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory, and anxiouſly inquired what they muſt do? Being told, that they muſt repent and be baptized for the remiſſion of ſins, they gladly received the word, and were baptized, and admitted to the apoſtle's fellowſhip. It is the doctrine of this ſame Peter, that believers muſt make their calling and election ſure, by adding to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and every other grace. But does Peter tell theſe new converts, that, becauſe they had not had time thus to prove the ſincerity of their converſion, it was not ſafe to receive baptiſm, and enter into the church? Does he adviſe them to wait a while till they could manifeſt the reality of their repentance by its fruits? No, he admits them to fellowſhip immediately; but with this important caution, *save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

In the ſame manner the apoſtles conducted in the baptiſm of Cornelius, the people of Samaria, the Jaylor, Lydia, and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Had they conſidered aſſurance, as a qualification neceſſary to juſtify perſons in coming into the church, would they not, on theſe occaſions, have cautioned their proſelytes againſt receiving baptiſm immediately? Would they not have adviſed them to a greater trial of themſelves than could have been made in a few hours?

It cannot be pretended, that theſe proſelytes had a certain knowledge of their own ſincerity. Much leſs can it be ſuppoſed, that the apoſtles knew them to be ſound converts. *They* knew men's hearts no other-

wiſe, than we may know them, by view of what appears in their lives. They could only, hence, form a rational judgment, a charitable preſumption. The diſciples at Jeruſalem believed not Paul to be a diſciple, nor did even the apoſtles venture to receive him as ſuch, till they had evidence from the teſtimony of Barnabas. Yea, we find in fact, that they admitted into the Chriſtian church many, who afterward appeared to be ungodly. Simon, the ſorcerer, is a remarkable inſtance. We learn from Paul's epiſtles, that in moſt of the churches to which he wrote, there were great numbers of unſound profeſſors. The apoſtles, therefore, did not know, that all, whom they received into the church, were ſavingly converted; for it is manifeſt, that many of them were not ſo. And ſince they received new proſelytes, whoſe ſincerity muſt, at preſent, be doubtful to themſelves, as well as others, without the leaſt intimation of a neceſſity of delaying for the removal of doubts, we may with great ſafety, conclude, that a ſerious perſon, who believes the goſpel, and deſires to be found in the way of duty, and of the divine bleſſing, though ſtill in doubt concerning the gracious ſincerity of his heart, has a right to come to the communion of the church.

And indeed, if Chriſtians were to delay, till all their doubts were removed, I am afraid few would come to it at all. And perhaps theſe few would not be of the better ſort. While the ſelf confident hypocrite drew near, the meek, the modeſt, the humble, would ſtand afar off.

The members of the church in Corinth, as we learn from Paul's firſt letter to them, ran into moſt ſcandalous diſorders in their attendance on the Lord's ſupper. They behaved in ſuch a riotous manner, as made it evident that they diſcerned not the Lord's body; diſtinguiſhed not this ordinance from a com-

mon meal, or even from a Pagan feſtival. One took before others his own ſupper; and one was hungry, having eaten nothing before he came to it; and another was drunken, having indulged to exceſs there; and the poorer members were deſpiſed. This unworthy partaking the apoſtle rebukes in the ſevereſt terms; and warns them, that they were eating and drinking judgment to themſelves, of which they had melancholy proof in the ſickneſs and mortality which had been ſent among them.

But what advice does he give them in the caſe? Does he direct them to withdraw from the Lord's table? No, he ſhews them the danger of coming in this manner, and exhorts them to come better prepared and diſpoſed. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.* He does not ſay, let a man examine himſelf and withdraw; but let him examine and partake. *And when ye come together, tarry for one another; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together to condemnation.* This paſſage, far from being a juſt ground of diſcouragement, proves the point which we have ſtated, that ſuch as have a deſire to comply with a divine inſtitution, are not to delay, on account of their humble doubts concerning their converſion. If the fear of unworthy partaking were a reaſon for not partaking at all, as well might the fear of praying, or reading and hearing the word, in an unworthy manner, be a reaſon for omitting theſe; for it is evident that the ſcripture enjoins the ſame temper of heart in *these* duties, as in *that*. The truth is, we are required to attend on every ordinance with godly ſincerity; and a ſuſpicion of our inſincerity is not an excuſe for neglect; but a reaſon for examination, repentance and amendment.

Some perhaps will ſay, for ſome have ſaid, we have

ſenſible deſires to approach to God in all his ordinances; but there may be deſires which are not gracious; and we fear *ours* are ſuch; we, therefore, dare not approach, for we think leſs guilt is incurred by abſtinence, than by attendance.

But conſider, God requires your attendance; and you muſt either attend or forbear, comply or refuſe: There is no medium: and certainly there can be no more grace in your *fears*, than there may be in your *deſires*. If your deſires to attend an ordinance are not ſpiritual, neither can the fears, which reſtrain you from attending, be called ſpiritual: You can, therefore, be no better accepted in your neglect, than in your compliance; for you act on no better principles in the former, than in the latter.

It is vain to inquire, in what way you ſhall contract leaſt guilt: Your buſineſs is not to contrive how you can ſin at the cheapeſt rate: Your care ſhould be not to ſin at all.

If you ſay, you decline the communion through fear of offending God; examine whether you are not deceived. Are you as conſcientious in every thing elſe, as you would ſeem to be in this? Are you as much afraid to offend God in other matters, as you pretend to be in this? If you allow yourſelves in any ſin, or in the neglect of any duty, be aſſured it is not the fear of offending God, but ſomething elſe, that hinders your approach to his table. But if you really have ſuch a fear running through all your conduct, and operating in all your deliberate actions, you have a very good evidence of your right to the holy communion: for, in all acts of worſhip, you ſerve God acceptably, when you ſerve him with reverence and godly fear.

The man found at the marriage feaſt without a wedding garment, fell under the awful cenſure of the king, who commanded that he ſhould be bound and caſt into outter darkneſs.

Will you say then, it is the safer part not to come to the marriage feast at all, lest being found unworthy, we share the fate of this guest? Remember, they who made light of the king's invitation, and refused to come to his son's marriage, were treated with no more lenity than the unworthy guest. He sent forth his armies and destroyed them, and burnt up their city. What then shall we conclude? Why, that a wicked man is safe no where. He who will not forsake iniquity, is secure neither in the church nor out of it.

The crime of this guest was, not that he was found at the *feast*: but that he was found *unsuitably attired*. The same dirt and rags would have been offensive elsewhere.

The servants were ordered to go out into the highways, and call to the marriage as many as they found; and they accordingly gathered together both bad and good. The man, you see, was a poor beggar, called into the king's house, from out of the street. How should he obtain a wedding garment? He had none of his own. He must come to the king's house to receive one; for there was clean raiment, as well as meat and drink. Where then lay his great crime? Surely not coming in to the king's house, for he was bidden to come; and such as refused were destroyed; but in sitting among the guests in his ragged and defiled condition, and refusing to wear the pure raiment provided for him. And such will be the condemnation of false professors at the last day; not simply that they have come within God's church, and attended on his ordinances; but that, while they have sat under the gospel dispensation, made a good profession, and enjoyed all the means of holiness, they have continued in the love and practice of their sins; that while they have heard Christ preach in their streets, and have eaten and drunk in his presence, they have been work-

ers of iniquity. We are not to imagine that we may safely work iniquity, if we will only keep out of the church. Such will be condemned wherever they are found. The kingdom of God is come nigh to us; his word and ordinances are given to us. We cannot place ourselves in the condition of heathens, if we would; for God has placed us in a very different condition. The light has risen upon us; the word of salvation is sent unto us. And now what choice shall we make? If we treat God's ordinances with utter contempt, we are condemned; if we attend upon them in such a manner as to receive no benefit from them, still we are condemned. Our only safety then is, to profess the gospel, and obey it; name the name of Christ and depart from iniquity; this is to come to the marriage supper, and put on the wedding garment.

Let us fear lest we receive the grace of God in vain. Let us beware lest our privileges, instead of being the means of our salvation, serve only to aggravate our final condemnation.

You see how the case stands. All are required to come within God's church, and attend on his appointed ordinances; and none are allowed to do this in a hypocritical and ungodly manner.

Your duty lies plain before you; study no evasions; God's commands are express; your obligation to obey is indispensible. Attend on the ordinance in question, and every other, as you have opportunity; keep in view the end of their institution, which is the promotion of faith and purity. Imagine not that ordinances operate by a kind of charm, to do you good without making you better; you will only be accepted in hearing Christ teach, and in eating in his presence, when you also depart from iniquity. For his kingdom is not merely *meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

1 Corin. i. 2.

Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth; to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

WE have already considered the *nature* of a Christian church; the *purpose* of its institution; the relation of *children* to it; and the *qualifications* necessary to an attendance on its ordinances.

What now lies before us is,

V. To explain that *fellowship*, or *communion*, which does, or ought to subsist among professing Christians, whether in the same or in divers churches.

To this subject, we are led by the last clause in our text; *Grace and peace to the church of God in Corinth, with all who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.*

We are here taught, that, as all Christians, in whatever place they may dwell, or may worship, are disciples of the same Lord, and call on God in the name of the same Mediator; so there is an important relation, and ought to be a sacred fellowship among them.

For the illustration of this matter, I would observe,

I. There is a *virtual* fellowship or communion among all true saints, whether near or remote: whether known or unknown to each other. They

are all engaged in the same design, united in the same interest, and partakers of many of the same things.

This is the sense in which the word is most frequently used in scripture; and this is analogous to the sense which it ordinarily bears in common life. Particularly,

Real saints have *fellowship in the gospel.* They have received one and the same rule of faith and practice. Though they may differ in their opinions concerning some particular things contained in the gospel, yet their sentiments in the essential doctrines and precepts of it, are the same.

They have received one *common faith; like precious faith.* Though their faith may differ in its extent and degree, yet, in its object, nature and influence, it is one and the same. The object of it is divine truth; the nature of it is receiving the love of the truth; the influence of it is purifying the heart.

They are all formed to the same *holy temper.* They are renewed after the image of God; are joint partakers of a divine nature. There may be great variety in the time, manner and circumstances of their renovation, and in the strength and degree of the Christian temper; but holiness, in its general nature, is the same in all. It is a conformity to God's moral character.

They are all partakers of the same divine *spirit.* There are diversities of gifts and operations; but it is the same spirit that worketh all in all. Hence the apostle speaks of *the fellowship of the spirit*, and *the communion of the Holy Ghost.*

They are engaged in the same *good work;* in the same *great design.* They are working out their salvation, and promoting in their respective places, the

intereſt of Chriſt's kingdom. They are fellow labourers in the ſame ſervice, the ſervice of God and their own ſouls. They are fellow workers in the ſame holy calling. They are fellow ſoldiers in the ſame ſpiritual warfare; fighting againſt the ſame enemies, ſin, ſatan, and the world; applying the ſame armour, the ſhield of faith, the helmet of hope, the breaſtplate of righteouſneſs, and the ſword of the ſpirit; and they act under the ſame leader, Jeſus the captain of their ſalvation.

They have one common *interest*. They have a joint intereſt in the bleſſed God; for there is one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in them all. They bear the ſame relation to Jeſus Chriſt; for there is one Lord and Saviour, by whom are all things, and they by him. There is one common ſalvation, in which they all are ſharers. They are all juſtified by the ſame atonement, waſhed in the ſame blood, ſanctified by the ſame grace, and ſaved by the ſame interceſſion. They have an intereſt in the ſame promiſes, and a title to the ſame inheritance. They are called in the ſame hope, and are joint heirs of the ſame glory. They are fellow citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God.

In theſe reſpects, there is a fellowſhip among all ſincere Chriſtians. In many of theſe things, ſaints on earth have communion with thoſe in Heaven.

One connot but remark here, how diverſe this fellowſhip is, from that which ſome boaſt of; *a mutual ſympathy, or fellow feeling, between ſincere Chriſtians, by which one immediately perceives the grace, and knows the character of another.* The ſcripture never uſes the word *fellowship* in this ſenſe, nor does

it ſpeak of any ſuch thing in other terms. It is certain, that the apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians were not acquainted with ſuch a ſympathetic intercourſe of ſpirits. If they were, why did not the eleven diſciples diſcern, that Judas was a hypocrite; Why did not the Chriſtians of Jeruſalem believe Paul to be a diſciple? Why did not they feel his graces, when, after his converſion, he eſſayed to join himſelf to them? Why could not the apoſtles themſelves be ſatisfied of his converſion, without the teſtimony of Barnabas? What occaſion was there, that Chriſtians ſhould carry with them letters of commendation, as we find they did, when they travelled to places where they had not been known.

As the goſpel knows no ſuch correſpondence of heart between Chriſtians; and never once uſes the word fellowſhip, or communion in any ſuch ſenſe, it is a perverſion of ſcripture, as well as reaſon, to pretend to ſuch a thing now, and call it by a ſcripture name. I proceed to obſerve,

2. Besides the *virtual* communion, before deſcribed, among ſincere Chriſtians, there is an *actual* communion among thoſe who are known to, and have intercourſe with, one another. This conſiſts in mutual regards and good offices.

The good Chriſtian extends his benevolence to all, to ſtrangers, heathens and enemies; and, from this principle, ſhews kindneſs to all, as far as their occaſions require, and his circumſtances permit. But for them who appear to him in the character of ſaints, he has a love, not only of benevolence, but alſo of eſteem and approbation. He wiſhes well to all, whether good or bad; but he values men chiefly according to their virtuous converſation. While he is diſpoſed to do good to all, he reckons himſelf under

ſome ſuperior obligations to thoſe who are of the houſehold of faith. He delights in the ſaints as the excellent of the earth, and is the companion of them who fear God. He loves the brethren, and ſuch he eſteems all Chriſtians, whether they belong to the ſame ſociety with him, or to another. He confines not his regard to thoſe of his own ſect, or his own particular community; but, like the apoſtles, extends it to all who, in every place, call on the name of Jeſus Chriſt, *their* Lord, as well as *his*, and the common Saviour of them who believe.

In order to the exerciſe of true Chriſtian love, it is not neceſſary to know the ſincerity of men's hearts. It is enough that, by their profeſſion and converſation, they appear to us in the character of Chriſtian brethren, and by their works give us reaſonable ground to think they have faith. We may, in a proper ſenſe, have this *actual* fellowſhip with one who is not a ſincere Chriſtian; and may not have it with one who is ſuch. So long as Judas appeared in the character of a diſciple, his brethren had fellowſhip with him; they eſteemed him, placed confidence in him, and even thought him better than themſelves; but with Paul, the diſciples at Jeruſalem had not this *actual* fellowſhip; they confided not in him, nor believed him to be a diſciple, till he produced ſome proper evidence of a change in his ſentiments and practice.

3. There is alſo a *ſpecial* communion, which does, or ought to take place among thoſe Chriſtians, who are united in the ſame particular church, or religious ſociety.

As they have explicitly covenanted together for ſocial worſhip and common edification, ſo they are un-

der peculiar obligations to each other, unitedly to purſue this important purpoſe.

This *special* communion principally conſiſts in a joint attendance on the ordinances of Chriſt.

It is ſaid of thoſe who received the word preached by Peter, on the day of pentecoſt, *that they continued ſtedfast in the apoſtle's doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. They were together, and continued daily with one accord in the temple; praiſing God.* The apoſtle to the Hebrews exhorts the profeſſors of religion, *that they conſider one another, to provoke to love and good works, not forſaking the aſſembling of themſelves together.* St. Paul ſpeaks of the Corinthian believers, as *coming together in the church, and into one place.* He repreſents *the whole church as coming together in one place*, for breaking of bread, for ſocial prayer, and for attendance on the preaching of the word. Theſe expreſſions teach us, that the members of a particular church ought to walk together in the ordinances, and unitedly to attend on the ſtated worſhip of God, as they are able, without unneceſſary neglect. And, indeed, it is included in the very idea of a particular church, that they worſhip God together, at the ſame time, and in the ſame place. The apoſtle directs the Corinthians, *when they come together, to tarry for one another;* for which ſurely there could be no reaſon, if they might diſperſe here and there, and ſome worſhip in one place, and ſome in another, and ſome no where.

The acceptableneſs of worſhip, indeed, depends not on the place where it is performed. But it much depends on a ſpirit of peace and union among the wor-

ſhippers. For this reaſon, the church is to come together into one place, that there may be no ſchiſm, but all her members may with one mind, and one mouth glorify God. They muſt be builded together, that they may become an habitation of God through the ſpirit; muſt be fitly framed together, that they may grow into an holy temple in the Lord.

THERE may be frequent occaſions for the members of the ſame church to meet for ſocial worſhip in different places, and even in private houſes. Paul, when he abode in Epheſus, preached and taught both publicly, and from houſe to houſe. We are not to imagine a temple, or public houſe, ſo peculiarly ſacred, that divine worſhip can no where elſe be uſeful to men, or pleaſing to the Deity. The private meetings of chriſtians, conducted with a real view to peace and edification, are much to be commended. But when any of the members of a church withdraw from the uſual place of worſhip, and aſſemble elſewhere, either with an intention to cauſe diviſion, or in a manner which tends to it, they violate the order of Chriſt's houſe, and interrupt the communion which ought to ſubſiſt in it. Though Paul taught from houſe to houſe, yet he approved not thoſe teachers, who *crept* into houſes to lead the ſimple captive, and diſturb Chriſtian fellowſhip. He warns Chriſtians to mark and avoid thoſe who cauſe diviſions, for ſuch ſerve not the kingdom of Chriſt, but their own private deſigns. One great end of ſocial worſhip is peace and union; and it ought always to be conducted in a manner which tends not to defeat, but promote this end. It is not the ſacredneſs of one place rather than another, but the common edification, which obliges

the whole church to come together in one place. The members no longer walk in fellowſhip, than they thus unitedly attend the ſacred orders of Chriſt's houſe.

Among divine ordinances, the *Lord's ſupper* deſerves particular attention; for one main deſign of this was to be a mean of brotherly communion. Eating and drinking together, at the ſame table, is a *natural* act of fellowſhip. Doing this at the Lord's table is an act of *Chriſtian* fellowſhip. *The cup which we bleſs, and the bread which we break, is the communion of Chriſt's blood, and of his body:* and by our joint participation of them, we acknowledge ourſelves to be one family, the children of one parent, the diſciples of one Lord. *We being many are one body, and one bread,* or loaf; *for we are all partakers of that one loaf.* This ordinance is a love feaſt, and ought to be *kept, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and truth.* No trifling cauſes ſhould divert or detain us from it; and no evil paſſions accompany us in it.

And here I cannot but take notice of a practice too common among the profeſſors of religion; *their withdrawing from the Lord's table, becauſe a particular brother has injured, or offended them;* for which I find no foundation in the goſpel. We are, indeed, to *withdraw from every brother who walks diſorderly.* But how? By breaking up the communion? No, but by *putting away the wicked perſon from among us; and by purging out the old leaven, that we may be a new lump.* We may think our brother unworthy of the privilege which he aſſumes; but ſhall *his* unworthineſs deprive *us* of the privilege? We are, in proper ſeaſon, to take the meaſures preſcribed in the goſpel, for his reformation; but, in the mean time,

we are neither to abſent ourſelves from the table, nor to forbid his attendance; for we can juſtly exclude him only by conviction in a regular proceſs. If the caſe is ſo circumſtanced, that ſufficient evidence for his conviction cannot be produced, he muſt be left to the judge of all men. Whatever our opinion may be of his guilt, we are not to withdraw on account of his attendance. Judge nothing before the time.

You will ſay, *Charity is neceſſary in our attendance at Chriſt's table, but with ſuch a brother, how can we ſit down in charity?* People often confound themſelves in this matter, by their partial notions of charity. If by charity were intended an opinion of others as good Chriſtians, you could not ſit down in charity with thoſe of whom you thought otherwiſe. But where do you find this deſcription of charity? or where is this good opinion of all your fellow communicants required, in order to your ſitting at Chriſt's table? It is the effect, not the eſſence of charity, to hope all things. If you have a benevolent, meek, forgiving temper toward thoſe whom you think not to be true Chriſtians, you can ſet down in charity with them; for this is the ſcriptural idea of charity. If you remember a brother hath ought againſt you, go and be reconciled to him. If you have ought againſt a brother, go and tell him his fault. If he repent forgive him; if he repent not, ſtill indulge no rancor nor hatred in your heart. Thus ſit down at the feaſt in charity, in kind affection, to your brethren and to all men.

Perhaps ſome will ſay, 'We withdraw from the table when a brother has injured us, becauſe his preſence awakens in us unſuitable paſſions.'

But remember, the indulgence of malevolent paſſions is your ſin; and you are not to abſent yourſelves from communion, but to diſmiſs *them;* and ſo keep the feaſt in ſincerity and love. Malice and ill-will indulged in the heart are wrong, whoever is the object, whether a brother, or a heathen. And on this plea, you might as well withdraw, when the latter, as when the former had done you an injury.

Consider alſo, you were required to pray, and to hear the word, with the ſame charity which is required in the ſupper. *When you ſtand praying, you are to forgive if you have ought againſt any man.* And you are to *lay apart all guile, malice and envy;* and thus to *deſire the ſincere milk of the word; receiving it with meekneſs.* Your plea, therefore, might as well be urged for neglecting public worſhip, or even family prayer, be ſure, if the offender happens to be preſent, as for abſenting from the ſupper.

The truth is, you are never to excuſe yourſelves from acts of duty, on account of evil paſſions working in you; but immediately to war againſt them.

It will be aſked, *How can I have communion with a church, while ſhe tolerates ungodly and ſcandalous members?*

But let me aſk you, my friend, does ſhe tolerate them? If ſhe does, whoſe buſineſs is it to take the firſt ſtep towards rectifying the diſorder? It is yours, as much as any man's. It is yours principally. You pretend, that you ſee ſuch perſons in the church. Others perhaps ſee them not, or have not evidence againſt them. Have you reproved them? Have you taken a brother or two to aſſiſt you? Have you brought your complaint to the church? If you have done none of theſe things, you are the moſt reprehenſible of any

member; for you ſee the ſin, and expoſe it not. Go firſt, and do your own duty. You can have no pretence for withdrawing, till you know that the church actually tolerates vicious characters; and this you cannot know till you have taken the meaſures which Chriſt enjoins.

But though I may think a church to be, in the main, a true church, yet if I ſee errors in her, ought I not to teſtify againſt them by withdrawing from them? By no means. Your withdrawing is no teſtimony againſt her particular errors; it is only a general, indiſcriminate charge. It ſignifies that you are diſpleaſed at ſomething; but points out nothing. You are to commune with her; but not adopt her errors; then your conduct will ſpeak an intelligible language. Chriſt teſtified againſt the errors of the Jewiſh church, and laboured for her reformation; but ſtill he held communion with her as a church of God. Let his example be your rule.

This leads me to obſerve farther, that ſpecial fellowſhip among the members of a particular church muſt include mutual watchfulneſs, reproof and exhortation.

As Chriſtians, in the preſent ſtate, are but imperfect, one end of their covenanting and aſſociating together is, that they may afford mutual aſſiſtance in the great concerns of religion, and be fellow helpers in the work of their common ſalvation. Accordingly, they are required to conſider and admoniſh, comfort and encourage one another, as there is occaſion; to be all ſubject one to another, and to be clothed with humility. By virtue of our ſpecial relation, as members of one church, we are to rebuke our brethren,

and not ſuffer ſin upon them. Thoſe who offend, we are firſt to addreſs in a more private manner: them who are deaf to private expoſtulations, we are to bring before the church; ſuch as contemn the counſels of the church are to be cut off from her communion; but the penitent are to be reſtored in the ſpirit of meekneſs. Once more.

Our ſpecial fellowſhip requires mutual candor, condeſcenſion and forbearance.

We are to conſider ourſelves, and our brethren, not as ſinleſs, but imperfect beings, attended with infirmities, ſubject to temptations, liable to offend, and to be offended. While we are cautious not to give offence by doing things grievous to them, we ſhould make all reaſonable allowances for them, when they do things grievous to us. We ſhould neither ſtiffly oppoſe, nor zealouſly urge indifferent matters. We ſhould not ſeverely animadvert on ſmaller faults, nor magnify accidental failings into heinous crimes; but give every one's conduct the moſt favourable turn it will bear. Such is the apoſtle's advice. *We that are ſtrong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. Him who is weak in the faith receive ye; but not to doubtful diſputation. Let us not judge one another; but judge this rather, that no man put a ſtumbling block in his brother's way. Be of the ſame mind one toward another. Condeſcend to men of low eſtate. Let no man ſeek his own, but every man another's wealth. Follow the things which make for peace and edification. Let all your things be done with charity.*

4. The laſt branch of Chriſtian fellowſhip, which I ſhall mention, is that which ought to ſubſiſt among

different churches; among all who, in every place, call on the name of our common Lord.

As all Chriſtian churches are united under, and ſubject to one head, ſo they are members one of another, and therefore ought, like the members of the natural body, to preſerve a reciprocal intercourſe. The apoſtle ſays, *As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; ſo alſo is Chriſt. For by one ſpirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free.* Care, therefore, ſhould be taken, *that there be no ſchiſm, or diviſion in the body, but all the members ſhould have the ſame care one for another.*

A particular church ought to conſider herſelf, not as an unconnected ſociety, but as a part of Chriſt's general kingdom: her care muſt not be confined to herſelf, but extended to her ſiſter churches: She is to ſeek, not merely her own profit, but the profit of many.

Some diverſity of ſentiment and practice may take place in different churches, and yet all remain true churches of Chriſt; as there may be divers opinions among the members of the ſame church, and they ſtill be real chriſtians. We are neither to reject a church, nor to exclude a particular Chriſtian from our fellowſhip, for ſuppoſed errors, which appear not to be of ſuch a nature and magnitude, as to ſubvert the foundation of Chriſtianity. Our apoſtle teaches us, 'that we are to regard all as our fellow chriſtians, and all churches as ſiſter churches, who, in every place, call on the name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, both theirs and ours; who profeſs one body, one ſpirit,

and one hope of their calling; and who hold the same head from which all the body is knit together. In a word, he cautions us, that 'we reject not those whom God has received.' If we know a particular church, in which errors are admitted, we are to afford our assistance for her amendment. But so long as we believe God owns her, by continuing to her his word and ordinances, and blessing them for her spiritual benefit; it is arrogance, it is impiety, for us to disown her. We have no warrant to withdraw our fellowship from a church, unless she has essentially departed from the gospel; or imposes on us terms of fellowship, which we cannot in conscience comply with.

If it be asked, in what actions different churches are to have fellowship? I answer;

They ought occasionally to commune with each other in the word, prayer, and breaking of bread; to admit each other's members to occasional communion with them; to recommend their own members to other churches, into whose vicinity they may remove; and to receive members of other churches on their recommendation. When Apollos passed from Ephesus into Achaia, the brethren in Ephesus wrote to the disciples in Achaia to receive him. When Phebe went from Cenchrea to Rome, Paul wrote to the Roman church, that they should receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints.

Churches are also to have fellowship, by mutual counsel and advice, when difficulties arise.

Though no church, or number of churches have an absolute jurisdiction over other churches, yet they should always be ready to afford help and assistance, at the request of sister churches, as occasions may re-

quire. We find in the history of the Acts, that the church of Antioch, on a difficulty which arose there relating to circumcision, sent Barnabas and Paul, and certain others with them, to Jerusalem, to consult the apostles and elders of the church there, and to ask their advice upon the matter. When those messengers from Antioch came to Jurusalem, they were received by the apostles and elders, and by the church. And when the apostles had determined the matter in question, they, together with the church, sent messengers, and by them, a letter to the Antiochean and other churches in the vicinity, declaring their opinion and advice in the case referred to them.

This example, as well as the reason of the thing, shews the propriety and necessity of mutual assistance among churches by counsel and advice, in order to the common edification and comfort.

I have now distinctly illustrated the several matters proposed to your consideration. Permit me, before I conclude, to point out to you the proper improvement of this subject.

We who have made an open profession of religion, and have joined ourselves to the church of God, with an explicit engagement to walk together in his commandments and ordinances, are now called upon to consider the obligations we are under, and the duties especially incumbent upon us.

1. Let us be well settled in the principles of that religion which we profess.

We are called into a church state, that, being edified in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, we may be no more children, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and the cun-

ning craftineſs wherewith they lie in wait to deceive. Jeſus Chriſt is the ſame yeſterday, today, and for ever. His goſpel is ever the ſame; not variable like the humors and opinions of men. Therefore, be ye not carried about with divers and ſtrange doctrines, as if religion was ſometimes one thing, and ſometimes another. It is a good thing that the heart be eſtabliſhed with grace. We ought not indeed to be ſtiff and inflexible in our own ſentiments and uſages, merely becauſe they are our own. We ſhould give up former opinions, and adopt others, when evidence is offered ſufficient to juſtify the change. But then a ficklenes of temper, a verſatility of ſentiment, a diſpoſition to fall in with every novel opinion, and to follow every impulſe of fancy, is utterly unbecoming a Chriſtian. Such unſteadineſs indicates either the want of competent knowledge, or the want of any fixed principles in religion.

Amidst the various opinions which are propagated and maintained, an honeſt chriſtian, I am ſenſible, may often be perplexed to determine what is truth. But then, I would obſerve, it is by no means neceſſary, that he ſhould be able to anſwer every argument adduced in ſupport of error. There are certain great and leading principles, in which every chriſtian muſt be ſuppoſed to be ſettled; and by theſe he may try the doctrines propoſed to him, and judge whether they are of God.

There are two grand points which the goſpel always keeps in view. One is the indiſpenſible neceſſity of holineſs in heart and life, in order to eternal happineſs. The other is, our entire dependence on the grace and mercy of God, through the Redeemer,

for pardon, ſanctification and glory. Every man, who profeſſes to be a Chriſtian, muſt be ſuppoſed to be ſettled in theſe grand points. The man, who imagines that he is not indebted to, nor dependent on a Saviour, or that there is no need of a conformity to his holy pattern and precepts, in order to final ſalvation, can, with no conſiſtency, pretend to be a chriſtian.

All ſuch doctrines, as plainly contradict either of theſe principles; ſuch, on the one hand, as exalt men above a dependence on Jeſus Chriſt, and the influences of the divine ſpirit; and ſuch, on the other hand, as confound the difference between virtue and vice, and obſtruct the influence of the divine commands, muſt be rejected, whatever ſpecious arguments may be urged in their favour.

2. Let us maintain a conſtant, devout attendance on the appointed ordinances of Chriſt.

If we careleſsly neglect theſe, we contradict the deſign of a church, and our own character as members of it.

Christians are bound to attend on all ordinances, one as well as another. The goſpel makes no diſtinction. The primitive Chriſtians continued ſtedfaſt in the apoſtles' doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.

There are among us ſome, who profeſs the religion of Chriſt, and who, by their regular attendance at the ſanctuary, as well as by their general converſation, expreſs a regard for the religion which they profeſs; but yet abſent themſelves from the Lord's table. Such was not the practice of Chriſtians in the apoſtolic times. The celebration of the ſupper was then

a part of the ſtated worſhip of the Lord's day; and in this, as well as in other parts, all profeſſors joined. They continued ſtedfaſt in fellowſhip with the apoſtles, as well by breaking bread, as by prayer and doctrine. The diſciples at Troas, we are told, came together, on the firſt day of the week, not only to hear Paul preach, but alſo to break bread.

I URGE none to come blindly, or againſt his conſcience, to the holy table. Every one muſt judge for himſelf, and be perſuaded in his own mind. One man cannot ſee with another's eyes, nor act on another's faith. But then, it is a plain fact, Chriſt calls all to be his diſciples, and commands all his diſciples to ſhew forth his death by an attendance on his ſupper. And therefore, ſuch as are hindered by ſcruples concerning their fitneſs, muſt not make themſelves eaſy with them, but take pains for the removal of them. They muſt ſeek light, that, if they are in an error, they may rectify it; and if they are under ſin, they may repent of it. They muſt humbly apply to God for his grace to lead them into truth, and to purify their ſouls; and whatever doubts they have about a particular ordinance, they muſt diligently attend on all thoſe means which they think themſelves warranted to uſe. 'The meek, God will guide in judgment; the meek he will teach his way.'

3. WE are called to brotherly love, peace and unity.

THE goſpel urges love as the bond of perfectneſs, as a virtue of the firſt importance. Paul, in his epiſtles to the churches, never forgets to recommend to them, that they be joined together in the ſame mind—that they ſpeak the ſame things—that they have the ſame love—that there be no diviſions among them—

that they avoid such as cause divisions and offences. To shew how essential unity is to the being of a church, he compares it to a household, which subsists by love, and in which all the members have one interest, and are guided by one head—To a building, all the parts of which are framed and compacted together—To a natural body, all whose limbs are animated by the same vital principle, and feel for each other.

Brotherly love is an extensive grace. It is not confined to those of our own society; but reaches to all Christians, and Christian societies in every place. The apostle wishes grace and peace to all, who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus. We are to consider all as our brethren, who appear to hold the essentials of the Christian faith, and to maintain a practice agreeable to it; and to all such brotherly love must extend. If our love reaches no farther than to those of our own sect, or those who usually worship with us, it is only a party spirit; it has nothing of the nature of Christian love.

Against such a contracted idea of love, the apostle, in our context, carefully guards us. 'It has been declared to me,' says he, 'that there are contentions among you. Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.' They were puffed up for one teacher against another. One admired this preacher; another that; and another a third; and, by their party attachments, raised troublesome disputes and dangerous contentions in the church. But, says he, 'Is Christ divided?' Were ye not all baptized in his name? Have ye not all professed his religion? Why then run ye into parties, as if Christ was divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Why say ye, 'we are of Paul?' Do ye expect

ſalvation through him? He was not crucified for you. He only preaches Chriſt crucified; and Peter and Apollos do the ſame. 'Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' Do ye imagine that baptiſm was deſigned to form you into diſtinct ſects? or that every one ought to follow the miniſter who baptized him, in oppoſition to others? And do ye think, that ye ought to love and eſteem, as brethren, thoſe only who are baptized by the ſame apoſtle, or in the ſame place and manner as ye were, as if ye were baptized into the name of the man, who baptized you? No, ye were baptized in the name of Chriſt, and are become members of his body, and, therefore, ye are the brethren of all Chriſtians, by whomſoever baptized; for ye are all baptized into one body.

You ſee, that baptiſm, a Chriſtian profeſſion, and a relation to a particular church, are not deſigned to unite one company of Chriſtians here, and another there, in oppoſition to each other; but rather to unite the whole Chriſtian world. This then, and this only, is true Chriſtian love, which extends its good wiſhes to the whole houſehold of faith; regards, as Chriſt's diſciples, all who, in every place, call on his name; and purſues, not merely its own private ends, but the general intereſt of Chriſt's kingdom, and the common welfare of his ſubjects.

True Chriſtian love to thoſe of our own ſociety cannot ſtop ſhort of a general love of ſaints. The love of the brethren, as ſuch, is a love of their holy and virtuous character; and if, on this account, we love our neareſt brethren, for the ſame reaſon we ſhall love all, who exhibit the ſame character. The good Chriſtian deſires the prevalence of religion every where: he would rejoice that all men were virtuous

and happy. He will not, therefore, purſue the religious intereſt of his own community, family or perſon, in ways prejudicial to the general intereſt of religion. He will not conſult merely his own edification, or that of thoſe with whom he is immediately connected; but will ſeek the profit of many, that they may be ſaved.

THIS love of the brethren leads to a more general love of the human race. Chriſtians are required 'to add to their brotherly kindneſs charity;' 'to increaſe and abound in their love one toward another, and toward all men.'

ONE who loves the brethren, becauſe they have the temper and obey the laws of Chriſt, muſt be ſuppoſed himſelf to have the ſame temper, and to obey the ſame laws. Chriſt exemplified, and has enjoined a univerſal philanthropy. He did good to enemies, as well as friends; he prayed for his crucifiers, as well as for his diſciples: and he has enjoined on us the ſame extenſive benevolence.

WHATEVER pretenſions we make to Chriſtian fellowſhip, if our love is confined to any particular community, or even to Chriſtian profeſſors, and does not, in ſuitable expreſſions of meekneſs, goodneſs and moderation, extend itſelf to others; it is not that love of the brethren which Chriſt enjoins; for where is brotherly kindneſs, there will be charity. The brotherly love, which Chriſt has taught, will make us meek and gentle toward all men. It will tame and ſoften the paſſions, correct and ſweeten the temper, and diſpoſe us to ſhew kindneſs to all men, whether they be Chriſtians or heathens, good men or ſinners.

4. As members of the church of God, we are called to an exemplary holineſs.

Christ gave himſelf for the church, that he might ſanctify it, and finally preſent it glorious. We are called to be ſaints; ſeparated from the world, that we may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; placed under goſpel light, that we may be the children of God without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe nation, ſhining among them as lights in the world. The honor of religion, and our own profeſſion, oblige us to walk circumſpectly among men. Thoſe, whom the apoſtles admitted to their fellowſhip, were exhorted to keep themſelves from an untoward generation. The looſe and unguarded converſation of Chriſtian profeſſors, gives occaſion to others to ſpeak reproachfully of religion itſelf. They are, therefore, to walk in wiſdom toward them who are without; to provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men, that the enemies of truth may be put to ſilence, having no evil thing to ſay of them.

5. Let us exerciſe a mutual watchfulneſs in our Chriſtian relation.

We are called into this relation, that we may by love ſerve one another, and be fellow workers to the kingdom of God. Let us be ready to receive, as well as to give, counſel and reproof, as there is occaſion; and in this imperfect ſtate occaſions will be frequent. Much allowance is indeed to be made for human weakneſs, for miſapprehenſion, and for wrong report. We expect ſuch allowance from our brethren, and they are intitled to it from us. Too great forwardneſs to remark, and too haſty a zeal to reprove every trivial fault, and every unguarded action in our

brethren, will tend rather to vex, than reform them; rather to hurt our influence, than to mend their tempers. Reproof is a delicate matter. It is not to be omitted, when occaſion calls for it; but it ſhould be given with tenderneſs and prudence, that it may be received with meekneſs and gratitude.

6. Our ſubject reminds us of the duty which we owe to our youth.

If the children of profeſſing Chriſtians are within God's viſible church, they are entitled to our particular notice and regard. Though it ſhould be conceded, that baptiſm denominates them members of the catholic church only, and they become not members of any local church, till, by their own act, they join themſelves to it, yet there is a duty which that church peculiarly owes to them, in which they were publicly given up to God, of which their parents are members, and under the immediate inſpection of which they live and act. If they are members of the church at large, thoſe Chriſtians, among whom providence places them, and who are witneſſes of their conduct, are eſpecially bound to watch over them.

We ought then to admoniſh and reprove them, whenever we ſee them behave in a manner unſuitable to the relation, which they bear to Chriſt; to rebuke their levity, impiety and profaneneſs, that we may reſtrain them from making themſelves vile; to put them in remembrance of the ſacred obligations, which they are under; and call their attention to that ſolemn day, when every work will be brought into judgment.

While they are under the immediate government of parents or others, it becomes us, in the moſt tender and friendly manner to give thoſe, who have the

care of them, information of their misbehaviour, when it is gross and repeated, and appears to proceed from a perverse disposition. If Christians would thus assist each other in the government of their families, at the same time exhibiting an example worthy of their character, much service might be done to the rising generation, and to the general interest of religion.

When youth have arrived to competent age, it would be proper that the church, as a body, should deal with them for open immoralities, obstinately persisted in against more private admonitions; unless they disavow their relation to the church, and her authority over them. In this case she may, in a formal manner cut them off from among their people, and declare them no longer under her care.

7. Our subject deserves the serious attention of the youth.

My children; God, in his good providence, has ordered the place of your birth and education, under the light of the gospel, within his church, and in Christian families. The most of you have been solemnly dedicated to God in baptism, and have received the visible seal of his covenant. See then, that you walk worthy of the privileges to which you are born, and of the character which you bear, as God's children, set apart to be his. Receive, with filial reverence and obedience, the instructions and counsels of your parents, who have bound themselves to God for your virtuous behaviour. Attend on the appointed means of religious knowledge, converse with the holy scriptures and other instructive books, seriously regard the stated services of the sanctuary, and endeavour in the use of these advantages, to become wise to salvation, and

to furnish yourselves unto every good work. As you have been consecrated to God, live to him. *Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.* Let your hearts be impressed with a sense of your sinful and helpless condition; look to Jesus as the only Saviour of a lost and guilty world: go to God in his name, and humbly implore the renewing and sanctifying influences of his holy spirit. Make an actual dedication of yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, deliberately resolving on a course of pure religion, and let all your conversation be as becomes the gospel. Keep up a daily correspondence with God in secret. Think and speak of him with reverence, detesting and avoiding every species of profanity. Cease to hear the instructions which cause to err from the words of knowledge. Entertain no licentious opinions, such as would encourage vice or pacify the conscience under guilt. Say to evil doers, depart from us, for we will keep the commandments of our God. Flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And rest not till you have actually taken the covenant bonds on yourselves, by a public profession of religion, and have come up to all gospel ordinances. Do not this rashly and thoughtlessly, but humbly and seriously, in the fear of God, and in obedience to him. Think not that you have a right to live at large. You are bound to confess Christ's name before men, and to submit to the government of his church. It was foretold by the prophet, that, when God should pour out his spirit on the offspring of his people, one would say, I am the Lord's, and another would subscribe with his hand to the Lord. Thus the church would increase

by the acceſſion of the young; her ſons would come from far, and her daughters be nurſed at her ſide. You cannot be ſaid to have fulfilled the obligations of your baptiſm, ſo long as you live in a careleſs neglect of any of the ordinances of Chriſt. There is reaſon to believe, that, in the inſtitution of the ſupper, Chriſt had a primary regard to the young, who were always the objects of his particular attention. This ordinance was inſtituted immediately after the celebration of the paſſover, which was a figure of the ſuffering Saviour. In alluſion to that feſtival, Chriſt is called our paſſover, ſacrificed for us. And in alluſion to the manner in which the paſſover was, eaten, we are required *to keep the feast* of the holy ſupper, *not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* Now the ſpecial reaſon aſſigned for the paſſover was, that *when children in time to come should inquire, what mean ye by this service?* The parent might thence take occaſion to inſtruct them *how the Lord saved his people from Egypt.* Accordingly the youth were to attend on the paſſover, in the appointed place, as ſoon as they were able to *bring an offering in their hand.* Now if the ſupper ſucceeds in the place of the paſſover, was not this one intention of it, that the young, on ſeeing this ſervice, might be led to inquire, what was meant by it, and thus open the way for inſtruction in the glorious redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. Come then, my children, attend a feſtival appointed for *you.* Here behold what your affectionate Saviour has done and ſuffered for ſuch loſt and helpleſs creatures as *you.* Behold, admire and love; ſmite your breaſts and return with new ſentiments of the evil of your ſins, and new reſolutions of future obedience. Remember

that all ordinances, and this in particular, were inſtituted as means of promoting a holy life; and *let every one, who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*

8. The invitation given to the young ſhall now be addreſſed to others. Come, join yourſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, which ſhall not be forgotten.

The Son of God has come down from Heaven, and has purchaſed a church with his own blood. Here he offers that ſalvation which guilty mortals need. He preſcribes the terms on which it may become yours. He has appointed ordinances, in the uſe of which you may be made meet for the enjoyment of it in Heaven. He has particularly inſtituted the ordinance of the ſupper, to remind you of his dying love, and the rich bleſſings purchaſed by his blood. He has required your attendance, to awaken your remembrance of him, warm your love to him, and ſtrengthen your faith in him.

Have you any ſenſe of your guilt and unworthineſs, and of his wonderful goodneſs and love? Any deſire to become conformed to his image, attempered to his goſpel, and entitled to his ſalvation? Any gratitude to your Divine Benefactor for all the great things which he has done and ſuffered for you? Any purpoſe of heart to honor and obey your glorious Redeemer and Lord? Any concern to promote peace and unity among his diſciples, to excite and encourage them to love and good works, and to advance the general intereſt of his kingdom? Then come and confeſs his name, declare your regard to his religion, ſubſcribe with your own hand, to him, attend on the ordinances of his houſe, walk in fellowſhip

with his profeſſed diſciples, join your influence to promote his cauſe, and ſhew by your holy converſation, that you really believe, and heartily love the religion which you profeſs.

To conclude, let us all unite our endeavours to make Chriſt's church glorious. Let us as workers together with Chriſt, and with one another, contribute in our reſpective places, and according to our ſeveral abilities, to edify and enlarge it. Let us not content ourſelves with appearing as members of the viſible church here below; but be concerned to become real members of the inviſible church above, that when the time of our departure is come, we may go to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, to an innumerable company of angels, the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born, whoſe names are enrolled in Heaven.

THE END.

WARNING

AGAINST THE

SIN OF DRUNKENNESS.

DRUNKENNESS, or excefs in drinking, is fuch an enemy to all that is wife and good, virtuous, and comely in a man, that every one ought to rife with indignation againft it as a moft deftructive and pernicious evil, which renders him viler than the beafts that perifh.

The poor fenfelefs brutes may, by accident, be overcome by ftrong liquors, becaufe they have no reafon to govern their appetites, nor fenfe of duty nor fhame; they have no confcience to be offended by it, nor future judgment to fear after it; and when the dog returns to his vomit, or the fow to its wallowing in the mire, they do but act according to their natures · but for that noble creature man, that is made after the image of God, and next to the angels in dignity and excellence; Man that has a difcerning mind to know good from evil, and a capacity to do the will of his great Creator and Lord; for a Chriftian, that has the vows of God upon him, who profeffes himfelf a difciple of the holy Jefus, and an expectant of the heavenly kingdom and glory; for fuch a creature to difturb his health, degrade his reafon, injure his confcience, offend his God and Saviour, and lofe his heaven and happinefs to pleafe a brutifh appetite, by drinking to excefs, or by a habitual practice of tippling, is fuch a defperate pitch of fin and folly, as can never be fufficiently cenfured and condemned.

Let me therefore befeech your ferious attention to, and may the God of all grace, by the powerful influence of his holy Spirit, render effectual this kind attempt, that you, who are now funk in the pleafures of the flefh, abufing the good gifts of God by excefs, and felling your heavenly inheritance for a few fenfual draughts, may be happily reftored to ftrict fobriety and temperance; and by attending to the rules of reafon and religion, be fitted to ferve and glorify your great and bleffed Creator and Redeemer here, and for ever. Confider then that, by drinking to excefs.

1. You are guilty of the greateft ingratitude to God. The goodcreatures which he has afforded you for your comfort in his fervice, you are offering as a facrifice to his enemy the devil, for drunkennefs is his

delight: You are converting his cordials into poiſon, his wine into the gall of aſps, and turning the good gifts of God againſt himſelf, while you are uſing thoſe things to diſhonor him, which his bounty has beſtowed upon you for his praiſe: and abuſing that to exceſs, which he deſigned only for your cheerful refreſhment.

2. You are deſtroying that in you, in which the very excellency of our nature, and your diſtinction from brutes conſiſts, namely, the uſe of reaſon, the drunkard has neither the ſpeech nor carriage, the ſenſe nor civility of a man, he is wild and diſorderly, ſenſual and brutiſh. If thou ſhouldſt mangle and deform thy body, and render it uſeleſs for the purpoſes of life, it were a far leſs crime than to deſtroy thy reaſon, and debaſe thy ſoul by vile indulgencies, which was originally made after the image of God, and was deſigned by him for the moſt excellent ends and uſes. If thou hadſt been born an ideot, or deprived of thy reaſon and ſenſes by ſome diſeaſe or caſual diſaſter, thy caſe had been greatly to be pitied; but to unman thyſelf, and make thyſelf mad, deſerves the ſevereſt puniſhment from him who gave thee an excellent nature, and formed thee for nobler purpoſes. And as drunkenneſs diſorders the underſtanding for the preſent, ſo the habit of drinking more than enough gradually impairs the faculties of the mind, till, at laſt, the perſon is rendered ſtupid and ſottiſh, uſeleſs and contemptible, ſo long as he lives: for,

3. This ſin makes you vile and contemptible in the ſight of others. The drunkard is the ſport of the fooliſh, and the grief of the wiſe: Like a ſhameleſs beaſt or a raging devil, he is no longer fit for human ſociety, but is a mere nuiſance and diſturbance to all that are about him, and every one is aſhamed that he ſhould be thought their friend or acquaintance. His reputation and eſteem among mankind is blaſted, for there is ſcarce any name more infamous than that of a ſot. Look on a drunkard ſpewing, reeling, and bawling, and ſee if he appear not viler than the beaſts that periſh: The beſt that can be done for him, in that ſtate, is to lay him out of the way till time and ſleep have recovered his loſt ſenſes.

4. Exceſs in drinking expoſes you to numerous evils and temptations. What numbers have unawares been drowned, broke their limbs, been burnt in their beds, and loſt their lives in a drunken fit? How many grievous diſeaſes does immoderate drinking bring upon the human body? Fevers, dropſies, palſies, conſumptions, and many other diſorders, which cauſe them to live in miſery, and ſhorten their days, ſome more ſlowly, and others more haſtily; ſo that where the ſword has

ſlain its thouſands, intemperance has ſlain its ten thouſands; who muſt all be ſentenced by God, at his great tribunal, as ſo many ſelf deſtroyers. What poverty and diſtreſs does the drunkard bring upon himſelf and family, his wife and children? What ſad temptations does he often fall into when liquor prevails over him, which, when ſober he trembled at the thoughts of ſuch, as murder, inceſt, whoredom, blaſpheming God's holy name, &c. For when reaſon is gone, the devil and his own luſts get dominion over him, and what has the man then to reſtrain them?

5. By this ſin you cauſe the holy Spirit of God to depart from you; and unfit yourſelf for every religious duty. How can the bleſſed and holy Spirit of God dwell in a naſty ſwiniſh drunkard? "What communication can light have with ſuch darkneſs, or the Spirit of Chriſt with ſuch a belial?" And when God is departed from the miſerable ſinner, how dreadful is his ſtate! Who then can make him holy or happy? When this is ſo, the heart grows hardened from the fear of God, evil luſts and paſſions more and more prevail, and the devil gains increaſing dominion over him, until he ſinks into remedileſs horror and deſpair. How unfit alſo is the poor beſotted wretch for any thing that is ſpiritual and good? He cannot ſo much as think one ſober thought, or receive any good impreſſion from the wiſe advice of others, nor lift up his eyes with acceptance to the God of heaven in prayer, in that ſenſeleſs polluted condition. Is it not, then, a miſerable thing to ſee a reaſonable creature who is capable of communion with his great Creator, of contemplating his excellencies, and living ſomething of the life of angels here below, ſelling all this happineſs for the ſwiniſh pleaſure of a little drink.

6. You hereby expoſe yourſelf to the dreadful curſes of Almighty God, whoſe anger burns like fire. The ſacred book of God is full of woes, which, like ſo many ſpears, ſtand pointed againſt the guilty contemmers of the laws of temperance. "Wo unto them that riſe up early that they may follow ſtrong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them.

"Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of ſtrength to mingle ſtrong drink," whether their reaſon is deſtroyed by it or no, Iſa. v. 11, 12. "Wo unto the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, Iſa. xxviii. 1. Wo unto him that giveth unto his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken that thou mayeſt ſee his nakedneſs. The cup of the Lord's hand ſhall be turned unto thee, and thou ſhalt be filled with ſhame for glory." Hab.

ii. 25. So that if you were not altogether loſt to the fear of God, and hardened in infidelity, ſurely the terrors of the Lord ſhould overawe you, and deter you from this evil practice. But,

7. Laſtly, If none of thoſe things will cauſe you to forbear exceſs, God himſelf will do it effectually; he will ſeparate your guilty ſoul from your vile body, and caſt both into the eternal damnation of hell. Infallible truth hath ſaid it, and your almighty Judge calls upon you to attend unto it, that by ſincere faith, and ſpeedy repentance, you may avoid the dreadful ſentence. "Be ye not deceived, neither fornicators, "nor thieves, nor drunkards, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. And again, "If ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die," ſpiritually and eternally. "Now the works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, drunkenneſs, revellings, and ſuch like, of the which I told you before, that they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God." Rom. vii. 13. Gal. v. 19, 21. Remember, miſerable ſinner, (if thou art reſolved to go on in thy treſpaſſes) when thou art lifting up thine eyes in torments, and begging in vain for a cup of cold water to cool thy tongue, parched with greater heat in proportion to thy former exceſſes, for how baſe a price thou haſt ſold thy Saviour and ſalvation, thy God, and thy Heaven, in that thou wouldſt not ſo much as leave a forbidden draught for them.

Let every one, therefore, that glories in his ſtrength to drink; that entices or compels others to exceſs; or is apt to be overcome themſelves by wine or ſtrong drink, be perſuaded to conſider theſe things, and ſhew themſelves men. We beſeech you, brethren, by all that is dear to you in both worlds, by the honor of the human nature, by the regard you owe to yourſelves and others, by the mercy and love of the bleſſed Redeemer, and the reverence and fear of the great God, that you will diſdain this deſtructive vice, which is ſo much your preſent reproach and damage, and will be your eternal torment and confuſion.

Confeſs to God with ſorrow and ſhame, thy former exceſſes. Fly to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt for mercy and grace to pardon thy ſins, and heal thy nature—Beg earneſtly and continually of God to implant his love and fear in thy ſoul, by his holy ſpirit. Be conſtant in the uſe of all God's holy ordinances, and carefully ſhun evil company, and all future temptations to this vice. By which means only thou wilt be enabled to reform thy life, and ſave thy ſoul from death. Amen.